POVERTY AND THREATS TO HUMAN SECURITY IN NIGERIA, 2007-2015

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Abstract

Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with risks that is inextricably linked in a complex and interdependent relationship with human security. Meanwhile, the most visible basis of poverty can be measured and linked in the relationship between human, economic and social sufferings. Therefore, this study explores the nexus between poverty and human security in Nigeria. This study interrogated the ability of the political leadership in Nigeria to tackle the menacing effects of recreated problems of hunger, commodity price hike, human trafficking, health pandemics, starvation, unemployment, community security, domestic violence, among others. This study argues that poverty and insecurity in Nigeria is reinforced by bad governance which sustains rising incidences of kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, collective contentious actions exemplified in the activities of militant groups, terrorist groups, ethnic-based protectionist groups. Using the relative deprivation theory, this study argues that raising poverty in Nigeria gives room for security threats as violence, banditry, agitations and frequent rise of individuals and groups against the state. However, this study discovers that the various poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria has become an avenue for the enrichment of the political class. Thus, this study suggests that the genuine approach to tackling poverty and insecurity in Nigeria is to make governmental policies to be people-centered, multi-sectoral and prevention-oriented.

Keywords: Poverty, alleviation, human security, relative deprivation, Nigeria.

Introduction

Deductively, the yardstick for measuring poverty levels is first tested by the political will of the political leadership to mitigate the menace. Second, it is also measured by the degree to which an appropriate national model for tackling poverty at the state/provincial, regional and even continental levels is genuine and adequate. Three, it serve as an avenue for measuring good governance through evaluating desirable, achievable policy priorities and state-led response and non-state actor led response to poverty and security threats.

However, the rising level of poverty in Nigeria questions our general developmental histories, material transformation and specific policy preferences on poverty. The level of poverty in Nigeria has increasingly placed frequent demands on the Nigerian government such that within a given time period and given means, various past and present Nigerian governments has forged numerous poverty alleviation programmes. These policies and programmes are the Operation Feed the

Nation (OFN) of 1978 in the General Murtala Mohammed's Government, Green Revolution of 1982 in Alhaji Shehu Shagari's Government, National Directorate for Employment (NDE) of 1986 in General Ibrahim Babangida's, the Directorate of Foods Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFFRI) of 1987in General Ibrahim Babangida's Government, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of 2001 in President Olusegun Obasanjo's Government, Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) of 2012 in President Goodluck Jonathan's Government, among others policies and programmes. Unfortunately, these policies and programmes has done little or nothing in ameliorating the sufferings of the Nigerian masses.

At the expense of privileging poverty alleviation by these various past and present Nigerian governments, the political leadership sees the fight against poverty as avenues for political rewards and isolating and pressuring political opponents. A Financial Nigeria Report (2015) reveals that a World Bank Report shows that the rate of extreme poverty fell in sub-Saharan Africa from 56% in 1990 to 43% in 2012. However, there is an estimated 63 million more people living in extreme poverty in Africa today than in 1990. This is as a result of the sub-continent's increased population growth that has outpaced economic output. Meanwhile, Ahiuma (2016) reveals that the level of poverty in Nigeria is such that no fewer than 112 million Nigerians (representing 67.1 per cent) of the country's total population of 167 million now live below poverty level as global poor hits one billion mark.

In fact, Opejobi (2016) presents a United Nations' (UN) report on Nigeria's Common Country Analysis (CCA) as describing the country as one of the poorest and unequal country in the world. Poverty and hunger have remained high in rural areas, remote communities and among female –headed households and these cut across the six geo-political zones. Again Opejobi (2016) indicates that in Nigeria, 37% of children under five years old were stunted, 18 percent wasted, 29% underweight and overall, only 10% of children aged 6-23 months are fed appropriately based on recommended infant and young children feeding practices. Over 10 million children of school age are out of schools with no knowledge and skills. Youth unemployment is 42% in 2016, creating poverty, helplessness, despair and easy target for crime and terrorism.

Also, a World Bank Report (2014) established that Nigeria over 70% population living on $1.25 (N200) or even less per day. Specifically, the report revealed that two-thirds of the world's extreme poor are concentrated in just five countries: India, China, Nigeria, Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The report discovers that less than 10% of the country's population amasses and controls over 90% of the country's wealth and resources, causing so much poverty and leaving so many citizens dying of hunger and disease. This situation has enhanced high rate of crime and insecurity in the country. The World Bank Report further attributes the causes of endemic poverty in Nigeria to harmful economic and political systems, national conflict and violence, human rights abuses, weak government effectiveness and efficiency, weak respect for rule of law, weak control of corruption, environmental conditions and changes, and population growth and

changes. The poverty situation has implication for human security for in the country. The present study, therefore, investigate poverty and human security in Nigeria between 2007 and 2015. It aims to ascertain how increasing poverty has created worrisome national security threats in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

For an in-depth examination, explanation and understanding of the nature, pattern, character, dynamics and motivating forces of poverty and threats to human security in Nigeria between 2007 and 2015, analysis is situated within the context of relative deprivation theory as espoused by the Dollard *et al* (1939). This theory was propounded as part of efforts to link socio-political and economic inequalities in the society to rebellions and insurrections. As individual and group- based theory of aggression, the relative deprivation theory argues that when expectation outstrips achievement regardless of the absolute levels of economic consumption or the provision of political rights, frustration is generated. Thus, the collective frustration turns to anger and violence (Dollard *et al*, 1939 & Davies, 1962).

However, social psychologists have often argued that "at the heart of every protest or (threats-emphasis added) are grievances, be it experience of illegitimate inequality, feeling of relative deprivation, feeling of injustice, moral indignation about some state of affairs, or suddenly imposed grievances". For Aku *et al* cited in Ijaiya (2000:422) describes relative deprivation in a five-dimension poverty matrix. This is evident in its characteristics which comprise the following:

❖ Personal and physical deprivation experienced as a result of health, nutritional, literacy and educational disability and lack of self-confidence;
❖ Economic deprivation drawn from the lack of access to property, income, assets, factors of production and finance;
❖ Social deprivation as a result of denial from full participation in social, political and economic activities;
❖ Cultural deprivation in terms of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and attitudes which deprive the people of control of their own destinies;
❖ Political deprivation in terms of lack of political voice to participate in decision making that affects their lives.

By application, this theory assists us to trace the historical antecedence of conflicts, agitations, human security threats and frequent rise of individuals and groups against the Nigerian government. Relative Deprivation theorists hold that the abysmal failure of the Nigerian government to addressing critical challenges to development in many parts of the country may be responsible for the agitations and internal insurrection by unarmed and armed militia groups against the state. To this end, this study argues that security threats in some parts of Nigeria are clear indications that government appears to have failed in her constitutional role of provision of welfare, protecting lives and properties of the Nigerian people.

Complexities in Poverty Management and Human Security in Nigeria

To some extent, a number of studies have attempted to assess and explain security and human security in a context-specific and varied manner. As for Dokubo (2010), security is a contested concept. It is viewed as a cooperative venture which no single nation can deal with. In the 20th and 21st century politics, the concept is littered with various usages as national, collective, common, cooperative, regional, integrative comprehensive, legitimate and equal. Agalamanyi (2008) notes that security has a subjective sense, is a value associated with confidence in physical safety and other most cherished values. He adds that security describes how people feel, not whether they are justified in feeling that way and that the Cold War concept of security has preoccupied itself with state, inter-state conflicts and military capability. It has consumed itself with defining and elevating the interests and security of the super powers and created an enabling environment for security to be viewed almost exclusively from the lenses of defense. Alli (2010:73) provides a comprehensive definition of security as:

> generally accepted to be about the condition or feeling of safety from fear, anxiety, danger, poverty and oppression; the defense, protection and preservation of core values and the absence of threat to these values. Increasingly however, it is being understood that security also concerns the individuals and groups and not just the states alone. When individuals are not secured, then the state cannot be said to be secure. The testimony to this is the rise in non-military sources of threats to security at the individual, societal, state, regional and global levels. This has led to the broadening of the concept of security to include non-military dimensions such as social, economic and political factors. Now, the environment, migration, ethno-religious factors, identity, health/diseases (HIV/AIDS, bird flu), poverty, human rights, political disputes, political succession, bad governance, and others also constitute issues that affect peace and security.

According to Poku, Renwick and Porto (2007), these global concerns about insecurity stems from a key shift of not viewing threats as driven only by strategic interests and global power-play of superpowers, but by non-military challenges which can best be described as complex and multiple challenges of development. As Brown, Hammill and Mcleman (2007) observes global insecurity and human conflicts interacts in problematic ways with climate change represented in a web of environmental drivers as drought, desertification, land degradation, water supply shortages, deforestation, fisheries depletion and ozone layer depletion. However, emerging problems of changing rainfall and temperature patterns has reshaped agricultural production of entire regions, hence intensifying poverty, food, water and energy scarcities.

Therefore, in Africa, security remains stubbornly tied to the traditional imperatives of state interests, power, military force and geographical instability. Also, in Africa, security means the protection of individuals with respect to the satisfaction

of the basic needs of life. It also involves the creation of social, political, economic, military, environmental and cultural conditions necessary for survival, including the protection of basic freedoms, access to education, healthcare, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his/her potential. Contemporary security is tied to complex and multiple challenges of development. Increasingly, development agenda is intricately linked to alleviating poverty to reduce human security threats (Poku, *et.al.* 2007).

The right to security is a human right enshrined in all relevant human right documents. The term human security was first used by the United Nations in its UNDP Human Development Index for 1994. In that document, human security had no military implications, but was entirely a civilian concept that was used for a complex mix of situations, widening the scope of security to seemingly incorporate everything. It has been concept that has been prevalent in international politics for around 10-15 years. Human security refers to the emerging security issues in which the point of reference is the individual person and his or her right to personal security (Matlary, 2008). Therefore, according to the handbook of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (n.d:7-8):

> Human security brings together the 'human elements' of security, rights and development. As such, it is an inter-disciplinary concept that displays the following characteristics: people-centered multi-sectoral comprehensive; context-specific and prevention-oriented. As a people-centered concept, human security places the individual at the 'centre of analysis.' Consequently, it considers a broad range of conditions which threaten survival, livelihood and dignity, and identifies the threshold below which human life is intolerably threatened. Human security is also based on a multi-sectoral understanding of insecurities. Therefore, human security entails a broadened understanding of threats and includes causes of insecurity relating for instance to economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. Moreover, human security emphasizes the interconnectedness of both threats and responses when addressing these insecurities. That is, threats to human security are mutually reinforcing and inter-connected in two ways. First, they are interlinked in a domino effect in the sense that each threat feeds on the other. For example, violent conflicts can lead to deprivation and poverty which in turn could lead to resource depletion, infectious diseases, education deficits, etc. Second, threats within a given country or area can spread into a wider region and have negative externalities for regional and international security.

In addition, the handbook of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (n.d:7-8) outlines the possible types of human security threats as:

Table I: Possible Types of Human Security Threats

S/N	Type of Security	Examples of Main Threats
1.	Economic security	Persistent poverty, unemployment
2.	Food security	Hunger, famine
3.	Health security	Deadly infectious diseases, unsafe food, malnutrition, lack of access to basic health care
4.	Environmental security	Environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters, pollution.
5.	Personal Security	Physical violence, crime, terrorism, domestic violence, child
6.	Community security	Inter-ethnic, religious and other identity based tensions
7.	Political security	Political repression, human rights abuses

Source: United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (n.d:7-8)

In fact, from the perspective of the threats to human security, the manifestation of increasing poverty in Nigeria is aided and sustained in many ways by:

- The primitive capital accumulation of state resources by the political class who have refused to use state finances to pursue genuine economic programmes that will improve critical infrastructure, consistently reduce youth unemployment and generate sustainable development.
- an inability to cope with problems inherent in climate change and rising population; tackling multiple stress on state resources to contain *Boko Haram* led-terrorism and resettling Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the North-East. Islamic Movement in Nigeria (ISM) religious activities' threat to national security in Nigeria generally and in particular in Kaduna State, Nigeria.
- Current inability of food producers to access agricultural credit facilities which has triggered decreasing agricultural production, increasing food and commodity prices.
- Increasing armed robberies, kidnappings, ritual killings, domestic violence, localized low-level conflict as constant communal clashes and farmers/herdsmen clashes.
- Increasing demands by protest and secessionist forces such as the Biafra independence agitators in the South East and oil resources control agitators in the Niger Delta Region; among other threats.

Generally, the narratives of poverty is mutually reinforced and interconnected to security. Therefore, the risk involved in ensuring security from fear, anxiety, danger, poverty and oppression revolves around the contestations with multiple interpretations of what the risks actually is and the commitment which should be attached to it. For Khalid (n.d) any discussion about poverty, and poverty eradication,

needs to begin with agreement on the definitions, or discourse, being used. This is very crucial to establishing criteria of success or failure of any poverty-eradication strategy. Yet, definitions of poverty vary widely and are often used interchangeably. In this challenge, inter-governmental agencies such as the United Nations (UN) continue to frame new concepts- or sometimes, more accurately buzzwords. Therefore, in conceptualizing poverty, a fuller understanding of contemporary discourses on poverty can usefully be drawn from the 1998 definition of poverty by the United Nations. Gordon (2005:4) cites the United Nations as defining poverty as:

> a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having a land to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.

Seventy per cent of Nigerians live below the poverty line of £1.29 a day, struggling with a failing infrastructure and chronic fuel shortages because of a lack of petrol refining capacity (Burleigh, 2013). Omoh (2014:1) credits a World Bank Report with ranking Nigeria third among world's ten countries with extreme poor. From the assessment, the World Bank established that Nigeria with about 170 million population falls among countries with extreme poverty whose over 70% population live on $1.25 (N200) or even less per day. Specifically, the report revealed that 7% of the 1.2 billion people living below poverty line in the world are Nigerians. The report stated thus: "The world's extreme poor are concentrated in just five countries: India, China, Nigeria, Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of Congo. If you add another five countries-Indonesia, Pakistan, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya, the total grows to 80 per cent of the world's extreme poor. Also, the World Bank ranked these countries based on their population and their share of the 1.2 billion extreme poor people in the world thus: India (33%), China (13%), Nigeria (7%), Bangladesh (6%), DRC (5%), Indonesia (4%), Pakistan (3%), Tanzania (3%), Ethiopia (2%) and Kenya (1%).

Drawing from the records of the Federal Office of Statistics, Garba cited in Oshewolo (2011) submits that about 15 percent of the population was poor in 1960, but the figure rose to 28 percent in 1980. A Nigerian Insight Report (2014) credits the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) with reporting that a staggering 112.519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions. This figure represents 69 per cent of the country's total population estimated to be 163 million. More worrisome is the fact that the poverty rate is rising at a time the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate is put at 7.75 per cent. Also, other poverty measurement standards used in measuring poverty by the NBS such as absolute measure, the dollar per day measure and the

subjective poverty measure, show that the poverty level is on the increase. Absolute measure puts the country's poverty rate at 99.284 million or 60.9 per cent; the dollar per day measure puts the rate at 61.2 per cent; and the subjective poverty measure puts it at 93.9 per cent.

In terms of human development index (A composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living), Nigeria was ranked 158th of the 159 countries surveyed in 2005. In 2007, Nigeria was still ranked of 158th out of 177 countries while in 2015 Nigeria was ranked 152 out of 188 countries. However, between 2005 and 2015, Nigeria's HDI value increased from 0.466 to 0.527, an increase of 13.1 percent (Odunsi, 2017; Nigeriawatch, 2007). The country has an increasing rate of poverty both at the regional and at the national level with high unemployment rate, high income inequality, low quality human capital, among others (Ogbeide and Agu, 2015). Using 10 indicators and three dimensions to measure poverty: Education, Health and Living standards, the United Nations' Global Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index Report (2015) presents regional averages in the six geo-political zones as South West - 19.3% ; South South - 25.2%; South East - 27.36%; North Central - 45.7%; North East - 76.8%; North West- 80.9%.(Lolade, 2015).

Information from the Economy and Finance Report (2014) shows that in the Social Progress Index (an indexing system that provides evidence of extreme poverty and poor social performance and as such questions basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing, and Opportunity)that out of 132 countries evaluated in 2014, Nigeria stands at 123.Unemployment rate increased from 21.1 in 2010 to about 25% in 2012 (Ogbeide and Agu, 2015).The unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 14.2 percent in the last quarter of 2016 from 10.4 percent a year earlier. It is the highest jobless rate since 2009 as the number of unemployed went up by 3.5 million to 11.549 million while employment rose at a slower 680.8 thousand to 69.6 million. The labour force increased by 4.194 million to 81.151 million and those detached from it declined by 625.7 thousand to 27.439 million.

The unemployment rate was higher for persons between 15-24 years old (25.2 percent), women (16.3 percent) and in rural areas (25.8 percent). In the previous quarter, the jobless rate was 13.9 percent. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria averaged 9.76 percent from 2006 until 2016, reaching an all time high of 19.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010. Life expectancy has been so low over the period, between 47 and 53 from1998 to 2015(Trading Economics Report 2017; Country Economy Report 2017).Indeed, the attempt by successive Nigerian governments to eradicate poverty and ensure human security has resulted in their adoption of such programmes in various period as the National Accelerated Food production (1972); Operation Feed the Nation (1976); the Green Revolution (1980); National Directorate of Employment (NDE); Better Life Programme/Family Support Programme (1986); Family Economic Advancement Programme (1997), among others. Furthermore, to eradicate poverty and ensure human security in Nigeria, Khalid (n.d) reveals that successive Nigerian governments

have incorporated ministries/agencies; collaborated with international agencies; established agencies equipped solely to fight rising poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. In fact, he credits the Joda Panel, established at the inception of the civilian administration of Obasanjo to review the various poverty eradication programmes of the previous regimes, as identifying over twenty such institutions.

Agaigbe (2015:16) discovers that "the poverty situation since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 included a dimension of powerlessness, this is characterized by dependence on others and lack of voice and options. As analysts conclude that poor people lack information about and access to government and they see the state as ineffective, irrelevant and corrupt". Also, Odukoya (2015:9) adds that Nigeria, "since the return to civil rule in 1999, despite all pretenses to the contrary, development and democracy are not on the agenda. The agenda has been the management of the crisis and contradictions of decadent capitalist by a comprador and petty-bourgeois class for primitive capital accumulation and profit of transnational capital through the instrumentality of the state".

Basically, what feeds into the broader narratives for understanding the poverty alleviation programmes, poverty and threats to human security in Nigeria is that the country is suffering from decades of poor economic policy, bandaged in part by the oil-resource curse, corruption and bad leadership. Politico-economic trends suggest that fraudulent practices, improper legal and regulatory framework, public-sector driven corruption has contributed to the problems of insecurity, mass poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. The workability of poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria is doubtful because as Burleigh (2013) asserts public office is so lucrative that people will kill to get it. Eighty per cent of the country's substantial oil revenues go to the government, which disburses cash to individual governors and hundreds of their cronies, so effectively these huge sums remain in the hands of a mere one per cent of the Nigerian population. Nigeria has 36 state governors, 31 of whom are under federal investigation for corruption.

Ibekwe, Udoh and Olawoyin (2017:1) credits a Nigerian Corruption Survey 2017 conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics Report with estimating the value of bribe paid to public officials by Nigerians in a year is N400 billion the equivalent of $4.6bn in purchasing power parity. This sum is equivalent to 39 per cent of the combined federal and state education budgets in 2016. The average sum paid as a cash bribe in Nigeria is approximately N5, 300. This means that every time a Nigerian pays a cash bribe, he or she spends an average of 28.2 per cent of the average monthly salary of N18, 900. Even the Nigerian Police Force, the judiciary and the prosecutors which are meant to tackle corruption hence fighting poverty and threats to human security is adjudged respectively by the report as by far the most corrupt public institution.

On this account, the blend of complexities in poverty is reflected in the politicalisation of poverty alleviation in Nigeria which has made its poor unemployed youths to be reduced to cannon fodders of violence and willing reservoir of human tools for the propagation of heinous political assignments of the political class. To further understand the poverty and human security narratives, this study adduces that

the symptomatic of poverty In Nigeria is reflected in increasing domestic violence, political-induced violence, domestic terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, ritual killing, forced migration, social exclusion, decreasing levels of social cohesion and social solidarity. The increasing poverty and human security threats is attributable to poor governance. The fight against poverty in Nigeria is slow because of the insincerity of the political class who see poverty alleviation programme as an avenue for enrichment, hence an industry for "poorism" which has increased social vulnerability. More widely, countries still coping with poverty and human security threats are described as either failing states or failed/collapsed states.

Conclusion/Recommendation

Basically, the transformative outcomes and environment of poverty in Nigeria reveals that an underlying problem (the concentration of power in the hands of a privilege few) which generates embittered symptoms and challenges (poverty, frustration-aggression, intractable conflict) that demand attention. A short-term solution (poverty alleviation programme) which is used to lousily correct the problem, with framed results that magnify the inability of the political leadership to link tactics to policy. Therefore, this study submits that tackling poverty in Nigeria is difficult because of the nature and character of the state. The nature and character of the Nigerian state is such that it yields to solidifying elitist gains at the expense of privileging genuine and pro-poor poverty alleviation programme. We therefore, recommend one, a people-centered, multi-sect oral and prevention-oriented approach to poverty eradication in Nigeria. Two, there is the need for a value re-orientation; the Nigerian people should hold the government accountable.

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