Social Policies and Poverty Reduction in Africa: A Nigeria-centered Perspective

Adamaagashi Izuchukwu Prince
Graduate of Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu state, Nigeria.
Correspondence: adamaizuchukwu@gmail.com

Ogar Elizabeth Ehi
Graduate student at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA
eogar@purdue.edu

Miracle Ngozichukwu Brown-Ofoeme
Graduate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University
miraclebrownofoeme@gmail.com

Isabella Adaobi Alobele
Graduate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University
isabella.alobele@gmail.com

Olutosin Collins
Graduate of Browen University
olutosinonyeka@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study focuses on the impact of social policies on poverty reduction in Africa, specifically in Nigeria. Poverty is a major challenge to social development, and its effects are exacerbated by factors such as terrorism and insurgency. The study uses a comprehensive literature review to examine the social policies implemented in Nigeria to address poverty, including initiatives like the National Accelerated Food Production Project and the Conditional Cash Transfer program. The study also explores the theoretical framework of poverty reduction, considering theories such as the Capability Approach and the Dependency Theory. The findings emphasize the importance of a multi-faceted approach to poverty reduction, recommending actions such as strengthening social policies, diversifying economic growth, improving access to education, enhancing infrastructure development, addressing governance and corruption issues, and fostering regional and international cooperation. By implementing these recommendations, it is anticipated that Nigeria and other African countries can effectively reduce poverty and improve social development, ultimately enhancing the quality of life and preserving human dignity.

***Keywords**: Social policy, poverty reduction, Strategies, Nigeria, Africa*

Introduction

Poverty stands out as one of the greatest challenges to social development in history, now being accompanied by the rise of terrorism and insurgency, which further exacerbate poverty (Bradshaw, 2006). The concept of poverty encompasses the absence of essential resources. These include fundamental necessities such as food, shelter, medical care, and safety, which are universally regarded as essential for preserving human dignity (Bradshaw, 2006). However, what constitutes a necessity can vary from person to person and is heavily influenced by social constructs and past experiences (Sen, 1999). According to Valentine (1968), the core of poverty lies in inequality, with poverty essentially being a state of relative deprivation. In other words, poverty is defined by the lack of resources and opportunities compared to others in society (Valentine, 1968). Adopting a social or relative definition of poverty allows communities to address local concerns in a flexible manner, as they can tailor their efforts based on the specific needs and resources available (Valentine, 1968). On the other hand, objective definitions of poverty enable progress tracking and facilitate comparisons between different regions (Bradshaw, 2006). Poverty in Africa is a complex issue that extends beyond just having low income levels. It encompasses various dimensions, such as limited access to education, healthcare, clean water, and other basic necessities. High poverty rates in Africa are influenced by a multitude of factors, including historical, political, economic, and social inequalities. Therefore, addressing poverty requires a comprehensive understanding of these interrelated factors. One approach that has gained recognition as a crucial tool in tackling poverty is the implementation of social policies.

Poverty remains a pervasive and pressing concern in Africa, affecting millions of people and hindering social and economic development. As the largest country on the continent, Nigeria is particularly affected by poverty-related challenges. The scale, complexity, and diverse causes of poverty in Nigeria require a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. In recent years, social policies have gained recognition as a pivotal tool in addressing poverty in Africa. Social policies encompass a wide range of interventions, including social protection programs, healthcare initiatives, education provisions, and job creation strategies. These policies aim to address the root causes of poverty, mitigate its effects, and improve the overall well-being of the most vulnerable populations. Africa's poverty challenge is multifaceted, resulting from a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors. Colonial legacies, unequal resource distribution, political instability, weak governance structures, and inadequate access to markets and credit are all contributing factors. These systemic issues have created a cycle of poverty that social policies seek to disrupt.

According to the World Development Indicators (2020), as of 2020, Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest number of people living in extreme poverty, totaling 413.3 million individuals. In comparison, South Asia has 216.4 million, East Asia and the Pacific have 47.2 million, Latin America and the Caribbean have 25.9 million, the Middle East and North Africa have 18.6 million, and Europe and Central Asia have only 7.1 million people living in extreme poverty. In Nigeria, poverty is characterized by several dimensions, including low-income levels, unemployment, inadequate access to education and healthcare, and limited social mobility. The country is home to the largest number of people living in poverty globally, with a significant portion of the population struggling to meet their basic needs. Recognizing the urgency of addressing this crisis, Nigeria has increasingly turned to social policies as a means of poverty reduction. The implementation of social policies in Nigeria aims to improve the welfare of vulnerable individuals and communities. One example is the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) scheme, which provides financial assistance to low-income households in exchange for fulfilling certain conditions, such as school enrollment for children or regular health check-ups. This program aims to break the cycle of poverty by addressing immediate needs while simultaneously investing in human capital development.

In March 2013, Africa was identified as the world's poorest continent with the highest percentage of people living in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2013). However, the World Bank also predicts that if current growth rates continue, most African countries will reach "middle income" status by 2025, which is defined as at least US$1,000 per person annually. This projection may come as a surprise to some, especially considering that poverty rates in some parts of Africa have been increasing. Comparing Sub-Saharan Africa to other regions, South Asia comes closest with 18.75% of its population living in extreme poverty in 2018 (World Development Indicators, 2013). Despite the implementation of these social policies, challenges persist. Limited funding and resources pose a significant obstacle to the expansion and effectiveness of poverty reduction programs. Insufficient investment in social infrastructure, including education and healthcare, hinders the potential impact of such interventions. Additionally, corruption, mismanagement, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems can hinder program implementation and undermine public trust.

A policy, whether created by an individual or an organization, is a clear and specific plan of action. When it comes to governments, policies are referred to as public policies. Social policy, on the other hand, is a term that encompasses various areas of policy within a governmental or political setting, such as the welfare state and the study of social services. Social policy includes guidelines, principles, legislation, and activities that impact the living conditions that contribute to human well-being and quality of life. The Department of Social Policy at the London School of Economics defines social policy as an interdisciplinary and applied subject that focuses on analyzing how societies respond to social needs. It aims to equip students with the ability to understand theories and evidence from a wide range of social science disciplines, including economics, sociology, psychology, geography, history, law, philosophy, and political science. Social policy can also be seen as actions that influence the welfare of a society's members by shaping the distribution and accessibility of goods and resources within that society.

The process of creating social policies is iterative and involves several steps. It begins with identifying problems or issues affecting society, which is often done by policy entrepreneurs who recognize negative impacts on the community. These concerns are then prioritized and set on the agenda for discussion and action. The next step is formulating a policy proposal to address the identified problems. Once a policy is proposed, it may undergo adoption and implementation. However, the process does not end there. Social policies need to be continuously evaluated to gather feedback and make necessary corrections to ensure their effectiveness. To implement social policies, a plan is required. Often, social policies are integrated into the government's programs and initiatives. A country's economic events and plans provide insight into the direction in which the economy is moving and demonstrate how social policies are being enacted to shape societal well-being.

According to the World Poverty Clock at the time of this paper, Nigeria has a total population of 209,707,456 people, and 43% of its population (89,822,903 individuals) lives in extreme poverty, which is defined as living on less than $1.90 per day. This data is in line with the findings of the 2018/2019 Nigeria Living Standards Survey, which revealed that 1 in every 10 Nigerians live in extreme poverty based solely on financial factors. The World Bank's Multidimensional Poverty Measure (MPM), which considers factors such as education and access to basic infrastructure in addition to monetary indicators, shows that approximately 47.3% (around 97 million people) of the Nigerian population live in multidimensional poverty. The Global Multidimensional Index (MPI) of 2020 indicates that within Sub-Saharan Africa, 71.9% of people in rural areas are poor, compared to 25.2% in urban areas. Nigeria is also home to the largest number of impoverished individuals in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is the world's poorest region.

In this research, a thorough examination is conducted on the intricate link between social policy and poverty reduction in Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria. The paper critically assesses the various challenges and limitations encountered during the implementation of social policies, evaluate the effectiveness of these policies in reducing poverty, and presents comprehensive recommendations. The primary objective of this study is to make valuable contributions to the enhancement of poverty alleviation strategies in the region. By delving into these areas, the research aims to shed light on the complexities faced by policymakers and stakeholders, facilitating a better understanding of the measures needed to achieve significant progress in eradicating poverty.

Methodology

This study employs a methodology that involves conducting a comprehensive review of existing literature. The review includes the examination and evaluation of scholarly articles, books, reports, and other pertinent sources that examine social policies and their effects on poverty reduction in Africa, with a focus on Nigeria. The objective of this methodology is to compile information, theories, and empirical findings from previous research in order to gain a deeper understanding of the intricate and daunting obstacles that policymakers encounter when attempting to implement successful poverty alleviation strategies..

Theoretical Framework

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding, this study will examine various theories as a theoretical framework. Specifically, two pertinent theories, namely the Capability Approach and the Dependency Theory, will be discussed.

1. **Capability Approach:**

This was conceived in the 1980s as an alternative approach to welfare economics.[2] In this approach, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum combine a range of ideas that were previously excluded from traditional approaches to welfare economics. The Capability Approach, proposed by economist Amartya Sen, offers a comprehensive and holistic perspective on poverty reduction by shifting the focus from income and material possessions to the capabilities and freedoms that individuals have to pursue a fulfilling life. It argues that poverty should be understood as the deprivation of essential opportunities and capabilities, rather than simply a lack of monetary resources.

In the context of Africa, where poverty is widespread and multifaceted, the Capability Approach provides a valuable framework for formulating effective and sustainable poverty reduction strategies. By recognizing that poverty has various dimensions, including social, economic, and political, this approach compels policymakers to consider a broader range of interventions. Health is an important dimension of poverty that the Capability Approach highlights. Poverty often leads to limited access to quality healthcare services, resulting in higher mortality rates, lower life expectancy, and increased vulnerability to diseases. The approach suggests that poverty reduction initiatives should prioritize improving healthcare systems, expanding access to quality medical facilities, and addressing public health challenges.

Education is another crucial aspect addressed by the Capability Approach. It argues that educational opportunities are not only valuable in themselves but also essential for individuals to develop their capabilities and enhance their future prospects. Poverty reduction efforts should focus on ensuring universal access to quality education, reducing barriers such as high school fees, improving educational infrastructure, and enhancing the quality of teaching. Political participation is also highlighted by the Capability Approach as a significant aspect of poverty reduction. It recognizes that marginalized and impoverished populations often lack voice and agency in decision-making processes, exacerbating their vulnerability. To counter this, poverty reduction strategies should aim to enhance political participation, strengthen civil society organizations, and promote inclusive governance structures. Access to social services, such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity, is another dimension emphasized by the Capability Approach. Lack of basic amenities disproportionately affects the poor, limiting their opportunities and perpetuating poverty. Addressing this requires investments in infrastructure development and policies that prioritize the provision of essential services to impoverished areas.

In Nigeria, as in many African countries, poverty reduction requires a tailored approach that addresses the specific challenges faced by the population. The Capability Approach, when applied to Nigeria, would emphasize the need to focus on improving basic social services and infrastructure in order to enhance the capabilities of the most vulnerable populations. Education plays a critical role in poverty reduction, as it equips individuals with knowledge and skills necessary for economic empowerment and social mobility. Policies under the Capability Approach would prioritize investments in education, such as increasing access to quality education in rural areas, reducing gender disparities in education, and improving the quality of teachers and learning materials. Providing scholarships and grants to children from low-income families can also contribute to reducing educational inequalities and breaking the cycle of poverty. Healthcare is another crucial aspect of poverty reduction that requires attention in Nigeria. The Capability Approach emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all individuals have access to quality healthcare services. In Nigeria, this would involve investments in healthcare infrastructure, including the construction and staffing of clinics and hospitals in underserved areas. Expanding healthcare coverage, reducing out-of-pocket payments, and providing targeted healthcare services for marginalized populations can also help improve their capabilities and overall well-being.

Access to clean water and sanitation is another dimension of poverty addressed by the Capability Approach. Many rural areas in Nigeria lack access to clean water supply and basic sanitation facilities, which significantly impact health outcomes and quality of life. Poverty reduction strategies should consider investments in water infrastructure, hygiene education, and sanitation facilities to ensure communities have access to safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation practices. Infrastructure development is essential for poverty reduction in Nigeria and is a vital enabler for economic growth. Poor road networks, inadequate electricity supply, and limited connectivity hinder economic opportunities and access to markets in many rural areas. Policies should prioritize infrastructure development, including road construction, electrification projects, and investment in transportation systems, to improve connectivity and enable economic activities in disadvantaged communities.

2. **Dependency Theory:**

The theory was developed from a Marxian perspective by Paul A. Baran in 1957 with the publication of his The Political Economy of Growth. The Dependency Theory is a critical framework that sheds light on the intricate dynamics between underdeveloped and developed nations. Specifically, when applied to the Nigerian context and many other African countries, it emphasizes the structural dependence of these nations on the more advanced economies. This theory reveals how the imbalanced power relations and exploitative systems perpetuate poverty and hinder development. From a Nigeria-centered perspective, the Dependency Theory elucidates the historical and ongoing external influences that have shaped the country's social policies and impeded poverty reduction efforts. Nigeria, as a former colony, has long been subjected to the exploitative practices of its colonizers. During the colonial era, the economic structure was organized to extract raw materials and resources, primarily benefiting the colonial powers. This arrangement left little room for industrialization and economic diversification in the Nigerian economy.

Moreover, after gaining independence, Nigeria's economic dependence on developed nations continued. This dependency can be observed through foreign aid programs, international loans, and investments, which often come with strings attached. Developed nations, as major donors, hold significant influence over Nigeria's economic policies and development initiatives. This external influence can perpetuate cycles of underdevelopment as it may prioritize the interests of the donor countries over sustainable and locally-driven development efforts. Additionally, the Dependency Theory highlights the systemic exploitation of underdeveloped nations' resources by developed nations. For instance, multinational corporations may extract Nigeria's natural resources at minimal cost, leading to environmental degradation and limited benefits for the local population. Some argue that this economic exploitation, often termed neocolonialism, continues to hinder Nigeria's ability to establish self-sustaining industries and reduce poverty. It emphasizes the imbalanced power relations between developed and underdeveloped nations. Developed nations occupy dominant positions in global economic and political systems, exerting influence over the policies and decision-making processes of underdeveloped nations. This unequal power dynamic can hinder the formulation and implementation of social policies that prioritize poverty reduction and sustainable development in countries like Nigeria. It may also perpetuate social and economic inequalities within the nation, exacerbating poverty and inequality.

By highlighting these external influences and power imbalances, the Dependency Theory provides valuable insight into understanding the obstacles faced by underdeveloped nations in overcoming poverty and achieving sustainable development. It encourages a critical examination of the structural dynamics that perpetuate underdevelopment and offers a foundation for exploring alternative approaches to economic and social progress. Ultimately, a comprehensive understanding of the Dependency Theory can guide policymakers and stakeholders in Nigeria towards more equitable and self-sustaining development strategies.

Literature review

Nigeria, as one of the countries in sub Saharan Africa that experiences high levels of poverty, has implemented various policies and programs over a significant period of time to cater to the needs of the poor. These initiatives include the National Accelerated Food Production Project, Green Revolution, Agricultural Development Programme, National Directorate of Employment, People's Bank, Community Bank, and Small-Scale Industries Credit Scheme. Additionally, the country has established programs such as the Family Support Programme and Presidential Initiatives on Cocoa, Cassava, Rice, Livestock, Fisheries, and Vegetables. Other key programs include the National Land Agricultural Development Agency, Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure, Family Advancement Economic Programme, National Poverty Eradication Programme, and National Economic Empowerment and Development Scheme. These efforts are also replicated at the state and local government levels according to sources cited.

The research by Kanyenze, Mhone, and Sparreboom (2000) emphasized the importance of vocational and technical skills training in reducing youth marginalization in Anglophone Africa. Through a survey in six Anglophone African countries (Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), they discovered that despite the implementation of various skills acquisition programs, unemployment rates continue to rise. Consequently, they suggest that youth unemployment should not be viewed as a random occurrence in an otherwise employment-friendly environment, but rather as a reflection of the broader structural issues affecting both adults and young people. Therefore, they argue that policies aimed at improving the well-being and employability of youths should be undertaken within the larger context of policies aimed at enhancing the overall labor absorption capacity of African economies

The study conducted by Obike, Ukoha, and Nwajiuba (2007) examined the impact of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) on poverty reduction in Nigeria, specifically focused on Abia State. They collected data from 120 participants using structured questionnaires, dividing them into NDE beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The researchers utilized the Foster, Greener, and Thobecke (F-G-T) measure of poverty and performed multiple regression analysis on the sample. The results showed that credit, farming experience, and farm income obtained through the NDE were significant factors in reducing poverty among NDE beneficiaries in Abia State.

During the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, 189 nations approved the "Millennium Declaration," which gave rise to a series of eight goals, eighteen numerical targets, and forty-eight measurable indicators to be achieved between 1990 and 2015. These goals, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), were designed to address poverty reduction and prioritize human development in all countries. The MDGs aimed to decrease global poverty and specifically target the most severe aspects of poverty. However, Africa faces significant challenges in reaching these targets, with projections indicating that the MDGs will be missed by a large margin. Only six countries are on track to achieve the goal of halving the proportion of people living below $1 per day by 2015, while half of the continent is falling behind or lagging in terms of reducing hunger, education, and health outcomes. Poverty rates have decreased globally, except in Africa, where poverty increased from 41 percent in 1981 to 46 percent in 2001. An additional 140 million people are now living in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. To achieve the MDGs, it is crucial to make significant and sustained improvements in infrastructure, as Africa's disproportionate burden of poverty and various obstacles to development make infrastructure advancements essential. Access to transportation, electricity, water, and telecommunications must improve for the world's poor if there is any hope of achieving the internationally agreed goal of cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015.

Anetor et al. (2020) conducted a study analyzing the impact of foreign direct investment (FDI), foreign aid, and trade on poverty in twenty-nine Sub-Saharan African countries between 1990 and 2017. The study utilized the feasible generalized least squares estimation method and revealed that FDI and foreign aid did not contribute to poverty reduction, whereas trade did. These findings contradict the extensive literature review conducted by Mahembe and Odhiambo (2019), who found a significant correlation between foreign aid and poverty reduction.

Adofu and Ocheja (2013) conducted a study in Kogi state, Nigeria to examine the relationship between skills acquisition and training in entrepreneurship and the reduction of poverty and unemployment. Descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequencies presented in tables, were used to analyze the data collected from six local government areas in the state. A chi-square test was used to determine the impact of entrepreneurship skills acquisition on poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction. The findings revealed that 65% of the respondents agreed that the lack of entrepreneurship skills among youth is a major cause of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Additionally, at least 60% of the individuals who participated in the skills acquisition program were able to afford basic necessities. As a result, the study recommended that the government should focus on developing the program to effectively address poverty and unemployment in the country.

Akpama, Esang, Asor, and Osang (2011) also noted that vocational skills acquisition can significantly reduce poverty and unemployment among young adults. Given Nigeria's increasing youth population and high unemployment rates, they emphasized the importance of providing entrepreneurship skills training in technical vocational education to tackle the alarming levels of unemployment.

Another related study by Maruta et al. (2020) examined the effects of foreign aid in the health, education, and agricultural sectors, as well as institutional quality, on the economic growth of seventy-four developing economies in South America, Asia, and Africa from 1980 to 2016. The results, obtained through the two-stage least squares estimation technique, indicated that the effectiveness of foreign aid varied depending on the quality of institutions in the region. In South America, education aid was more influential, while health aid was more effective in Asia. In Africa, agricultural aid played a more significant role in promoting growth. Using the endogeneity-robust generalized method of moments, Asongu and Tchamyou (2019) discovered that foreign aid positively influenced educational attainment, as measured by primary school enrollment and lifelong learning, across fifty-three African countries. Similarly, Brid and Choi (2019) conducted a study on seventy-six developing economies, examining the effects of foreign aid, remittances, and foreign direct investment on economic growth using dynamic and fixed-effect panel regression. Their results revealed that foreign direct investment and remittances had a positive effect on growth, while the impact of foreign aid was inconclusive.

The Role of Social Policies in Poverty Reduction in Africa: A Nigeria-centered Perspective

Social policy initiatives in Africa have gained significant attention in recent years, with many countries focusing on improving the quality of life and well-being of their citizens. Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa, faces numerous challenges in implementing effective social policies. However, the Nigerian government has recognized the importance of addressing social issues and has implemented various initiatives to tackle them.

- **Conditional Cash Transfer**
  One of the key social policy initiatives in Nigeria is focused on poverty reduction. Nigeria has a high poverty rate, with a large percentage of its population living below the poverty line. In response, the government has introduced programs such as the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) scheme, which provides cash transfers to the poorest households. Through this initiative, the government aims to reduce poverty, improve access to basic necessities, and empower individuals to escape from the cycle of poverty. Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs were introduced in the late 1990s in Latin America and have since gained popularity as an effective anti-poverty strategy in many developing countries in that region and beyond. These programs aim to reduce poverty in the short term through cash transfers, as well as in the long term by investing in human capital. Nigeria followed this trend by implementing its own pilot CCT program called "In care of the people" in 2007. Eventually, the government decided to incorporate CCTs into its social investment development programs, and by 2018, CCTs were operational in at least 26 states. In Nigeria, the objective of CCTs is to address poverty, vulnerability, and income inequality among the most disadvantaged populations. CCTs have yielded significant positive outcomes across Africa, such as the reduction of multidimensional poverty among young girls in South Africa. Recent studies in Nigeria have also shown the effectiveness of CCTs in lifting low-income households out of poverty and increasing the utilization of healthcare services by rural women.
- **Univsrsal Basic Education**
  Efforts have been made by the government to improve the availability of quality education, especially in rural areas. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program has been put in place to ensure that all Nigerian children, regardless of their social and economic background, have access to primary education. The UBE Program is a government initiative focused on eliminating illiteracy, ignorance, and poverty, while also promoting national development and integration. It was launched and implemented by the Nigerian government and people, with former President Olusegun Obasanjo officially starting the program on September 30, 1999. The UBE Program is Nigeria's way of achieving Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals related to education.
  Although the program began in 1999, its progress was delayed due to the absence of a law to enforce certain aspects of the program. However, on May 26, 2004, the UBE Bill was signed into law by the President after being approved by the National Assembly. The UBE Act 2004 includes provisions for early childhood care and education (ECCE),

primary education, and junior secondary education. While primary responsibility for funding basic education lies with state and local governments, the federal government also provides funding through 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund. States must meet specific criteria to access this funding. To coordinate the implementation of the UBE Program at the state and local government levels, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was established on October 7, 2004. The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) of each state and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) are involved in executing the program.

In order to ensure that primary education is accessible to every child in Nigeria, regardless of their socio-economic status, various measures have been taken, including the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program. This inclusive approach demonstrates the government's dedication to reducing educational disparities and promoting equal opportunities for all. Additionally, recognizing the importance of providing high-quality education, the government has introduced comprehensive initiatives that prioritize the improvement of educational standards. One crucial aspect of these efforts involves training teachers and equipping them with the necessary skills and resources to effectively teach their students. The development of the curriculum is also central to these governmental programs, ensuring that the educational content remains relevant, comprehensive, and responsive to the evolving needs of Nigerian students. These significant actions underline the government's unwavering commitment to establishing a strong and comprehensive educational system that caters to the needs of every child in Nigeria.

- **National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)**

Social policy initiatives have been implemented in Nigeria to improve healthcare access and quality for all citizens. The government is dedicated to this cause and has established the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to provide affordable healthcare services, particularly for vulnerable groups. In 1999, the Nigerian Government made significant efforts to establish the NHIS with the goal of achieving fairness in healthcare delivery. To effectively expand healthcare interventions and enhance healthcare systems, adequate financial resources, especially for those in poverty, are required. Implementing a health insurance scheme has the potential to secure funds for healthcare, increase resource management efficiency, and protect individuals from excessive expenses.

The success of the scheme relies on the participation of healthcare providers and beneficiaries. Studies have examined the adoption of the scheme by healthcare providers, revealing that many hospitals in the South-East region have registered with the scheme and a substantial number of respondents have accepted the program. However, there is conflicting data on the rate of uptake, with one study reporting a mere 0.3%. In contrast, the uptake in Lagos has shown a consistent increase. The NHIS administration aims to achieve a 30% population coverage by 2015. In comparison, France has a compulsory health insurance policy, while Ghana initially experienced a 62% uptake after implementing their national health insurance act in 2003, but subsequent years saw a decline according to annual reports.

- **The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP)**

In response to the increasing prevalence of violence in Nigeria, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) was passed in May 2015. This legislation was enacted to protect individuals from various forms of violence that have become alarmingly common both within households and in society as a whole. In Nigeria, there are distressingly frequent reports of spouses killing or injuring their partners, scorned lovers using acid to attack ex-partners, and individuals being forcefully separated from their families and loved ones.

The implementation of the VAPP Act, 2015 sought to address these violent acts and provide protection for the citizens of Nigeria. This Act represents a significant improvement compared to existing penal and criminal codes that address violence. Along with punishing perpetrators, the Act introduces provisions for compensating victims and safeguarding their rights.

Approaches to Poverty Alleviation

In the research conducted by Edralin, Tibon, and Tugas (2015), they identified four distinct approaches that can be used to address poverty. These approaches include the Economic Growth Approach, Basic Needs Approach, Rural Development Approach, and Target Approach. In the subsequent section, a detailed analysis of these approaches will be presented.

- **Economic Growth Approach**

  This approach gives significant importance to the accumulation of physical and human capital, with a specific focus on investing in education, health, nutrition, and housing for the labor force. The reasoning behind this emphasis becomes apparent when considering the positive impact of such investments on the workforce's quality and productivity. Previous studies conducted by Misana (1995), Sazama and Young (2006), and Edralin et al. (2015) provide support for this idea. Therefore, to achieve sustainable economic growth and effectively combat poverty, it is vital to acknowledge the essential role played by human capital in driving output. This understanding should be translated into appropriate allocation of resources and policy measures that enable human capital to assume its rightful position as a primary catalyst for economic expansion.
- **Needs Approach**

  In order to effectively combat poverty, it is crucial to ensure the provision of essential necessities such as nourishment, housing, clean water, sanitation, healthcare, basic education, and transportation. However, the effectiveness of these provisions relies on targeted measures. Without specific efforts to address the needs of the impoverished, this approach may not directly alleviate poverty. This is primarily because the poor face inherent disadvantages in terms of political power and their limited influence on the selection and implementation of government programs and projects. As highlighted by Ogwumike (2002), their marginalized position can hinder their access to and benefits from these essential services, further perpetuating their poverty. Therefore, to truly make a significant difference and improve the lives of the poor, it is essential not only to provide basic necessities but also to address the underlying issues of inequality and lack of representation that hinder their ability to access and benefit from these provisions.
- **Rural Development Approach**

  The rural sector is considered a distinct and crucial part of poverty reduction efforts, especially in developing countries where a large number of impoverished individuals are concentrated. Additionally, formal employment opportunities are scarce in this sector. As a result, traditional methods of reducing poverty may not be applicable to rural areas without significant changes in asset ownership, credit systems, and other related factors.

The approach to development in rural areas has shifted towards an integrated approach, recognizing the complex nature of poverty and requiring a comprehensive strategy. The aim of this approach is to address the basic needs of rural populations, including adequate access to food, housing, clean water, education, healthcare, employment, and income opportunities, with a particular focus on assisting the impoverished. However, a major challenge in implementing this poverty reduction approach is the difficulty in targeting the most vulnerable individuals in rural areas, as poverty is widespread. In simpler terms, the prevalence of poverty in rural regions makes it very challenging to prioritize assistance to those who need it the most. This complication greatly hinders the implementation of poverty reduction programs (Oladimeji and Abiola, 1998).

- **Target Approach**

  This approach supports the idea of targeting specific groups within a country for poverty alleviation programs. Examples of these programs include Social Safety Nets, Micro Credits, and School Meal programs (Oladimeji and Abiola, 1998). In order to minimize leakage, proper identification of the target group is necessary. Recently, there has been global concern about increasing income inequality and poverty levels, particularly in developing countries, and the need to alleviate it in order to improve people's standard of living. This has led to a shift from a Supply Driven Approach to a Demand Driven approach through the conceptualization and implementation of various Community Driven Development (CDD) programs. Targeting the poor has always been a challenge in development and emergency response programs (Farrington and Salter, 2006), and it is argued that using CDDs can improve targeting as they utilize local knowledge to define and identify the targeted groups more effectively (Mansuri and Rao, 2004).

  The Community Driven Development (CDD) Approach, broadly defined, gives control over decisions and resources to community groups. Unlike other approaches, CDD treats poor individuals and their institutions as active participants, collaborators, and resources to build upon. The World Bank (2003) defines CDD as an effective mechanism for poverty reduction that complements market and state-run activities by achieving immediate and sustainable results at the grassroots level. CDD can enhance sustainability and make poverty reduction efforts more responsive to the communities' demands. It has also been proven to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts, as it can be implemented simultaneously in a large number of communities, resulting in a significant impact on poverty reduction.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes and Strategies in Nigeria

Over the years, there has been significant attention given to poverty alleviation programs and strategies in Nigeria. The government and numerous organizations have made it a priority to address the high poverty rate in Nigeria, which is the most populous country in Africa. The National Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2019, the poverty rate in the country was estimated to be 40%, meaning that almost half of the population lives below the poverty line. In response to this alarming situation, the government has implemented several poverty alleviation programs with the aim of improving the living conditions of those living in poverty. These programs encompass a wide range of approaches such as Compulsory and Free Education, National Development Plans (NDPs), Social Investment Programmes, Enterprise and Empowerment

Programme (GEEP), Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSF), Increase in Minimum Wage, Constitutional Provisions,National Health Insurance

Compulsory and Free Education

The strategy of implementing compulsory and free education has been employed by the Nigerian government as a means to address poverty in the country. This approach aims to alleviate the financial burden on parents and caregivers, enabling them to utilize their resources to improve their family's quality of life. The Universal Basic Education (UBEC) Act mandates that Nigerian governments must offer free and compulsory basic education to children in primary and junior secondary school. The act also emphasizes the responsibility of parents to ensure their children attend school, with sanctions enforced for non-compliance. However, despite the positive intentions of the UBEC Act, the effectiveness of this strategy is undermined by the current state of public schools in Nigeria. These schools frequently impose illegal fees for administrative purposes, such as purchasing stationery, often exceeding the cost of tuition. This essay argues that providing adequate resources for public schools is crucial to enhancing the efficacy of this strategy and preventing its objectives from being undermined by the very issues it aims to combat.

National Development Plans (NDPs)

Nigeria has seen the implementation of various development and welfare plans throughout its history, stemming from both colonial rule and subsequent governments. These plans include the Ten Year Plan of Development and Welfare (1946-1960), the First, Second, Third, and Fourth National Development Plans (1962-1985), the Structural Adjustment Programme Reforms (1986-1989), the Perspective and Rolling Plans (1990-1998), and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (2003-2009). However, the successful execution of these plans has consistently been a challenge, resulting in deteriorating economic conditions and an increase in poverty. General Sani Abacha launched Vision 2010, which aimed to transform the economy and make essential needs more affordable. Unfortunately, this plan was not executed due to Abacha's untimely death. Other plans, such as Vision 2020, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, the National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy, and the current National Development Plan of 2021, have been introduced and have had varying levels of success. The failure of these plans can be attributed to a lack of political will, insufficient public engagement, and a lack of continuity by successive governments. The essay also draws attention to the Medium Term Plan, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), initiated in 2017 to rescue the economy from a recession. While the ERGP succeeded in pulling the country out of recession, it encountered similar challenges as previous plans. The current National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy (NPRGS) under the Buhari administration focuses on structural policies, industrialization, macroeconomic stabilization, and poverty reduction. Its objective is to lift 100 million people out of poverty within a 10-year timeframe.

Social Investment Programmes

Nigeria is currently utilizing the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) as a means of addressing the issue of poverty through social protection. This policy, established in 2016, views social protection as a strategy for reducing poverty and mitigating socio-economic shocks by improving livelihoods and preserving human dignity. With a budget of N765 billion, the NSIP received the highest allocation among selected projects in the approved budget for 2021. Over the period of 2016 to 2020, it has consistently received a yearly budgetary allocation of N500 billion, resulting in a total of N2 trillion. This makes it the largest dedicated provision for social investment in Nigeria's economic history. The essay briefly examines the prominent social investment programmes (SIPs) in Nigeria, including the N-Power Programme, Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (CCT), and the government's efforts in promoting entrepreneurship and skills development.

Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP); Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSF).

The N-Power Programme, which falls under the NSIP of the Federal Government, focuses on creating employment opportunities. It targets Nigerians aged 18 to 35 and aims to equip them with necessary skills within a specified period, depending on the category. The program also aims to provide work experience. Additionally, it contributes to improving public services. Beneficiaries of the N-Power Programme receive a monthly stipend of N30,000. However, the program's effectiveness is limited by factors such as delays in payment, lack of awareness, and limited access to internet services in rural areas, which prevent some individuals from benefiting from the program.

The CCT Programme is an ongoing social investment initiative that aims to alleviate poverty and address economic vulnerabilities in Nigeria. It consists of two categories of cash transfers: Conditional Cash Transfer and Top-up. The Conditional Cash Transfer supports poor and vulnerable individuals and seeks to improve household consumption, reduce poverty, and protect beneficiaries from further impoverishment. This program also helps build resilience against economic shocks. The Top-up Cash Transfer addresses capacity deficiencies and lack of investment in human capital. It provides incentives for extreme poor households to invest in education, health, nutrition, environment, and productivity. Under the CCT Programme, eligible poor households receive a monthly sum of N5,000, along with additional support upon meeting certain conditions. The program also facilitates capacity building through the promotion of savings groups, acquisition of entrepreneurial and technical skills, life skills, and financial inclusion. It provides coaching and mentoring to uplift the economic status of impoverished households. Households are identified for the Conditional Cash Transfers through a selection process conducted by the National Social Register, with eligibility criteria related to pregnancy registration, attendance at clinics, age requirements for children and women. However, the monthly allowance of N5,000 provided to eligible households through the CCT Programme is considered insufficient given Nigeria's economic conditions. Additionally, limited awareness about the program inhibits uninformed households from benefiting from it.

The GEEP program in Nigeria aims to support and boost the economic activity of small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) by offering them soft loans. This program includes MarketMoni and Tradermoni interventions, which are overseen by the Bank of Industry. MarketMoni provides MSMEs with affordable loans of up to N100,000, charging only a one-time administrative fee of 5% with no interest rate. However, under-banked and unbanked first-time borrowers are eligible for loans of up to N50,000. TraderMoni specifically targets petty business owners, such as vegetable and fruit sellers, bread hawkers, and kiosk owners. Enumerators gather their information and provide them with small loans. Initially, a N10,000 loan is given, which can be repaid within 6 months. Upon opening an account and registering a

Bank Verification Number, beneficiaries can qualify for an additional loan of N15,000. The paper acknowledges the importance of implementing a repayment system to prevent exploitation.

On the other hand, the NHGSF program aims to address issues of poverty, malnutrition, and education by providing school feeding to children and encouraging parents of vulnerable groups to educate their children. This program supports local agriculture and empowers cooks, thereby stimulating economic growth through the socio-economic value chain. Its mission is to provide one free meal per day to pupils in public primary schools in Nigeria by collaborating with stakeholders for sustainable implementation. Unfortunately, the NHGSF program has faced controversies, such as the discovery of N2.67 billion in private accounts that were intended for school feeding in federal colleges during the COVID-19 lockdown, as revealed by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

Constitutional Provisions

The Nigerian government has taken steps to address poverty in the country by incorporating economic, social, and cultural rights into the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) through objectives and principles that guide government policies. These objectives and principles are outlined in Chapter II of the CFRN, known as the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy. This means that the government is obligated to focus its policies on ensuring equal and adequate access to education at all levels, suitable shelter and food, sufficient medical and healthcare facilities, equal employment opportunities, environmental protection, and the safeguarding of natural resources and wildlife, among other things. The CFRN also requires the government to prioritize the security and welfare of citizens, promote citizen participation in government, and prevent discrimination. Sections 16, 17, and 18 of the CFRN specifically emphasize the government's responsibility to promote economic and social justice, economic empowerment, equality before the law, good governance, peace, and security for the benefit of the Nigerian people. However, despite these provisions, the principles and objectives outlined in Chapter II cannot be enforced and do not have the force of law if the government fails to comply with them. This is true even though all branches of government are legally required to adhere to and apply the provisions in Chapter II of the CFRN.

Increase in Minimum Wage

To tackle poverty in Nigeria, the Nigerian government has implemented an increase in the minimum wage from N18,000 to N30,000. Additionally, there is a proposal to exempt these workers from paying personal income tax. This increase in the minimum wage was enacted through the National Minimum Wage Act (NMW Act) of 2019. However, there are exceptions to this increment, including workers who are employed on a part-time or commission basis, establishments with fewer than 25 employees, workers in seasonal employment such as agriculture, and workers on vessels or aircraft regulated by merchant shipping or civil aviation laws.

Despite these exceptions, certain state governments have failed to implement the minimum wage increment as mandated by the NMW Act. For example, in Zamfara State, a public health worker in the Department of Agriculture at Tsafe Local Government Area still earns only N7,500 per month. It is argued that adopting a human rights-based approach to poverty reduction would discourage state governments from disregarding validly enacted laws such as the NMW Act. This approach, based on the principles of accountability, human dignity, and transparency, would ensure that laws aimed at addressing poverty in Nigeria are respected and enforced. Furthermore, this paper argues that the minimum wage increment has limited impact on alleviating poverty in Nigeria given the current economic conditions. With an unemployment rate of 33.3 percent as of the fourth quarter of 2020 (23,187,389 persons aged 15-64), and food inflation at 21.79 percent, it is suggested that an urgent upward review of the minimum wage is needed.

National Health Insurance

The Nigerian government has implemented the National Health Act (NHA) and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) Act as strategies to combat poverty and provide accessible healthcare services to vulnerable individuals. The NHA aims to regulate health services and protect the rights of Nigerians to access healthcare. Meanwhile, the NHIS mobilizes and combines financial resources to ensure affordable and quality healthcare for all Nigerians. The NHIS consists of two main social health insurance programs: the Formal Sector Social Health Insurance Program and the Informal Sector Social Health Insurance Program. The Formal Sector Program covers employees in the public and organized private sectors, as well as the Armed Forces, Police, and other Uniformed Services. The Informal Sector Program, on the other hand, caters to individuals in the informal sector, including employees of small companies, artisans, voluntary participants, rural dwellers, and others not covered by the Formal Sector or the Vulnerable Group.

Vulnerable Group Social Health Insurance Program (VGSHIP), which provides healthcare services to individuals who cannot actively engage in economic activities due to physical status, such as the physically challenged, prison inmates, children under five, refugees, victims of human trafficking, internally displaced persons, immigrants, pregnant women, and orphans. Funding for healthcare under the VGSHIP is generated from contributions made by the government, development partners, local organizations, and civil society. Despite the benefits offered by these programs, only a small percentage (around 3%) of the population is covered by the NHIS, with the majority enrolled in the Formal Sector Program. This can be attributed to factors such as lack of awareness, illiteracy, corruption, and weak institutional frameworks, which have hindered the NHIS from achieving its goal of providing affordable healthcare to all Nigerians, especially the poor and vulnerable.

This paper argues that adopting a human rights-based approach to development is essential to ensure the participation of all Nigerians, regardless of their location, through effective awareness campaigns and promotions to make the NHIS accessible to everyone.

Issues and Challenges affecting Reduction of Poverty in Nigeria

In the context of poverty reduction in Africa, there are several issues and challenges that need to be addressed. These can include: High population growth, Limited access to education, Unemployment and underemployment, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient agricultural productivity, Inequality and social exclusion, Political instability and conflict, Limited access to healthcare, Weak governance and corruption

1. **High population growth:** High population growth is a significant concern for countries worldwide as it poses various challenges to governments, societies, and the environment. The exponential increase in global population over the past century has resulted in numerous negative

consequences, putting a strain on resources and limiting the ability to provide essential services and opportunities for all individuals. One of the primary issues associated with high population growth is the strain it places on natural resources. As the population expand the demand for food, water, energy, and other essential resources increases. This heightened demand often leads to overexploitation and depletion of natural resources, causing environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. For instance, expanding agricultural activities to feed the growing population can lead to deforestation, soil degradation, and pollution. Similarly, the intensified use of water resources for domestic, agricultural, and industrial purposes can deplete freshwater supplies, leading to water scarcity and ecological imbalances.

High population growth impacts the provision of essential services such as healthcare, education, and housing. Governments find it challenging to ensure adequate healthcare facilities and services for all individuals, especially in densely populated areas. Limited access to healthcare can result in higher mortality rates, inadequate disease prevention, and increased vulnerability to epidemics. The education system also comes under pressure as the number of students surpasses the capacity of educational institutions, leading to overcrowded classrooms and reduced quality of education. Furthermore, providing affordable housing for the growing population becomes increasingly difficult, resulting in slums, inadequate living conditions, and homelessness. High population growth also poses significant economic challenges. While large populations can potentially contribute to a robust labor force and economic growth, if not accompanied by adequate job opportunities, it can lead to unemployment and underemployment. Insufficient opportunities for income generation can further exacerbate poverty and inequality within a society. Moreover, rapid population growth can strain social welfare systems and public infrastructure, as governments struggle to cater to the needs of a large number of individuals. Insufficient investment in infrastructure, transport, and sanitation can impede economic development and hinder the overall quality of life.

Furthermore, high population growth often leads to urbanization, as people migrate from rural to urban areas in search of better opportunities. This rapid urbanization puts additional pressure on cities and towns, resulting in overcrowding, increased pollution, inadequate sanitation, and traffic congestion. These issues not only negatively impact the environment and public health but also reduce the livability and overall well-being of urban residents. Addressing the challenges of high population growth requires a multifaceted approach. Governments should implement effective family planning programs, education, and awareness campaigns to promote responsible family size and birth control methods. Investing in education and healthcare, particularly for women and girls, can empower individuals to make decisions about their reproductive health. Furthermore, policymakers should focus on promoting sustainable resource management practices, promoting renewable energy, and implementing environmental protection measures to mitigate the strains of population growth on the environment.

2. **Limited access to education**: Limited access to education is a significant issue in many parts of the world, particularly in rural areas and developing countries. The lack of quality education hinders individuals' ability to acquire essential skills, knowledge, and qualifications, ultimately limiting their employability and opportunities for personal and socioeconomic growth. One of the primary factors contributing to limited access to education is the geographical location of individuals, particularly those living in remote or rural areas. These areas often lack educational

infrastructure such as schools, libraries, and training centers. As a result, children and adults residing in these areas face challenges in obtaining a quality education. The long distances they have to travel to reach educational institutions, coupled with inadequate transportation systems, exacerbate the problem, making it difficult for individuals to attend school regularly. Moreover, financial constraints also pose a significant barrier to education. Low-income families often struggle to afford the costs associated with education, such as school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other learning materials. Additionally, the opportunity cost of sending a child to school, particularly in areas where child labor is prevalent, may lead families to prioritize immediate economic needs over education. These financial barriers further exacerbate educational inequalities and hinder individuals from accessing quality education.

Inadequate educational infrastructure and resources perpetuate limited access to education. Schools in marginalized areas often lack qualified teachers, teaching materials, and technology necessary for effective learning. The lack of properly trained teachers reduces the quality of education, making it difficult for students to develop the necessary skills and knowledge for future employability. Insufficient learning materials and outdated curricula also hinder students' access to relevant and up-to-date knowledge, limiting their ability to compete in the modern job market. Limited access to education particularly affects marginalized groups such as girls, children with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. Sociocultural norms and gender-based discrimination often result in girls facing greater challenges in accessing education compared to boys. Factors such as early marriage, household chores, cultural beliefs, and safety concerns may force girls to drop out of school or prevent them from attending in the first place. Similarly, children with disabilities often face barriers such as lack of inclusive education facilities, trained teachers, and appropriate support services, which limits their ability to access quality education.

The consequences of limited access to education are far-reaching. Individuals who are unable to acquire an education face limited employment prospects, decreased earning potential, and a higher likelihood of being trapped in cycles of poverty. Without education, individuals may lack the necessary skills to participate actively in the workforce, hindering their ability to find decent and well-paying jobs. Consequently, societies and economies suffer from a shortage of skilled workers, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and inequality. To address the issue of limited access to education, it is crucial to prioritize educational reforms and investment in marginalized areas. Governments should allocate sufficient resources to develop educational infrastructure, including schools, libraries, and technology-based learning centers, in rural and remote areas. Initiatives to improve transportation systems and provide safe routes to schools can also enhance access to education. Financial barriers can be addressed through the provision of scholarships, grants, and other forms of financial assistance to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have the opportunity to receive an education.

Additionally, teacher training programs should be implemented to improve the quality of education in marginalized areas. By investing in the professional development of teachers and ensuring their fair and consistent remuneration, the quality of education can be greatly enhanced. Revising and updating curricula and learning materials to make them more relevant and inclusive will also contribute to improving the quality of education and enhancing employability prospects for students. Community engagement and awareness campaigns are crucial, particularly in changing cultural attitudes and promoting the value of education for all individuals, especially girls and children with disabilities. Efforts should be made to address gender-based discrimination and support initiatives that encourage and empower girls to access education. Providing inclusive education facilities and support services for children with disabilities is also essential to ensure their equal right to education.

3. **Unemployment and underemployment:** Unemployment and underemployment are intricate issues that continue to plague societies across the globe. Specifically, the scarcity of job prospects, particularly among young individuals, contributes significantly to the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty. This paraphrase highlights the interconnectedness of these problems and emphasizes the dire consequences they impose on individuals and communities. Firstly, we can examine the impact of the lack of job opportunities on unemployment rates. When there are few job openings available, the number of unemployed individuals naturally rises. This rise is often more prominent among young people due to their limited work experience and relatively low skill levels compared to more seasoned job seekers. Thus, the scarcity of employment options disproportionately affects this demographic, leading to high levels of unemployment, stagnating their personal growth, and hampering their financial independence. The correlation between limited job opportunities and underemployment must not be overlooked. Underemployment refers to situations where individuals are working in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills, education, or experience. This is often a consequence of a weak job market, where individuals are compelled to settle for jobs that are beneath their qualifications or fail to provide sufficient income or job security. The lack of suitable employment opportunities reinforces the cycle of poverty, as underemployed individuals struggle to earn a living wage and find themselves unable to escape the clutches of financial hardship.

The consequences of unemployment and underemployment extend far beyond financial strain. They have a profound impact on the overall well-being of individuals and their families, exacerbating social and psychological issues. Individuals who are unable to secure stable employment face constant stress, anxiety, and feelings of self-doubt. This can lead to a negative spiral, affecting their mental health and eroding their confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, the inability to support themselves and their families can result in a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness, further exacerbating the cycle of poverty. The adverse effects of unemployment and underemployment are not limited to individuals alone; they manifest severe repercussions for communities and societies as a whole. High levels of unemployment impose a significant burden on government resources, as they must provide financial assistance and social welfare programs to support the unemployed population. This strain often leaves governments scrambling to allocate sufficient funds to meet the growing needs of their citizens, diverting resources that could have been utilized for public infrastructure, education, healthcare, or other vital services. Moreover, communities struggling with unemployment and underemployment experience increased crime rates, social unrest, and reduced social cohesion. Desperation and frustration can push individuals towards criminal activities as they seek alternatives to financial stability. This, in turn, leads to deterioration in the quality of life for all community members, further deepening the cycles of poverty and inequality.

4. **Inadequate infrastructure:** Inadequate infrastructure poses a significant obstacle to economic development and poverty reduction, as it encompasses a range of deficiencies in essential services such as access to clean water, electricity, and transportation. This paraphrase

emphasizes how poor infrastructure directly affects societies, hindering progress and limiting opportunities for improving the living conditions of those in poverty. Clean water, a basic necessity for human survival, is often inaccessible or inadequate in areas with poor infrastructure. Insufficient water supply systems and inadequate sanitation facilities lead to waterborne diseases and health risks, disproportionately affecting impoverished communities. The lack of clean water not only compromises people's well-being and quality of life but also hampers productivity and economic growth. Without access to safe and sufficient water, communities struggle to maintain proper hygiene, face health challenges, and are unable to engage in income-generating activities effectively.

Similarly, limited access to electricity is another critical aspect of inadequate infrastructure. Electricity plays a fundamental role in various aspects of life, including education, healthcare, communication, and business operations. Without a reliable source of power, schools struggle to provide quality education, healthcare facilities are unable to store vaccines or operate essential medical equipment, and businesses face significant limitations in their productivity and growth potential. Additionally, access to electricity is essential for households in poverty, as it allows for lighting, heating, and cooking, enhancing their quality of life and reducing health hazards associated with alternative energy sources. Transportation infrastructure is equally vital for economic development and poverty reduction. Well-developed roads, railways, and ports facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people, connecting rural areas to urban centers and opening up markets for trade and commerce. In regions with inadequate transportation infrastructure, the cost of transporting goods increases, restricting access to markets and stifling economic growth. Moreover, limited transportation options hamper individuals' ability to access employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services, trapping them in poverty and limiting their social and economic mobility.

The consequences of inadequate infrastructure extend beyond economic stagnation. It reinforces social inequalities and perpetuates the cycle of poverty, as marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by these deficiencies. Urban areas tend to have better infrastructure compared to rural regions, exacerbating the disparities between them. This inequality further limits opportunities for individuals in poverty to escape their circumstances, as they face additional barriers in accessing key services and fully participating in socioeconomic activities. Addressing the challenges posed by inadequate infrastructure requires significant investments and proper governance. Governments and international institutions play a crucial role in implementing policies and allocating resources to improve infrastructure, particularly in underserved and marginalized areas. Partnerships between public and private entities can also provide innovative solutions to bridge the infrastructure gap and foster sustainable development. Investments in clean water supply systems, renewable energy sources, and transportation networks can enhance economic productivity, create employment opportunities, and improve overall living standards. Adequate infrastructure not only improves access to essential services but also paves the way for innovation, attracting investments and stimulating economic growth. Additionally, by prioritizing equitable distribution of infrastructure development, governments can actively work towards reducing inequalities and promoting inclusivity.

5. **Insufficient agricultural productivity:** Agriculture is a crucial sector in many African economies, providing employment opportunities and contributing to the overall economic

development of the continent. However, one of the major challenges faced by African farmers and the agriculture sector as a whole is the issue of insufficient agricultural productivity. Insufficient agricultural productivity refers to the inability of farmers to produce an optimal level of agricultural output given the available resources and inputs. Several factors contribute to this problem, including limited access to modern technologies, climate change, and other related challenges. Limited access to modern technologies is a critical constraint that hampers agricultural productivity in Africa. Many African farmers still rely on traditional farming methods and outdated techniques, which often yield lower productivity compared to modern practices. Access to modern agricultural machinery, efficient irrigation systems, and improved seeds that are resistant to pests and diseases is often limited. As a result, farmers struggle to realize their full potential in terms of agricultural output. In addition to the lack of modern technologies, the impact of climate change further exacerbates the problem of insufficient agricultural productivity. Africa is particularly vulnerable to climate change, with unpredictable rainfall patterns, increased frequency of droughts, and extreme weather events. These climate-related challenges make it difficult for farmers to plan and execute their agricultural activities effectively, leading to lower yields and income losses. Moreover, the lack of irrigation systems and water management measures further amplify the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity, as farmers become even more reliant on rainfall for their crops. Insufficient agricultural productivity has significant consequences on food security, poverty alleviation, and economic development in Africa. With low productivity, it becomes challenging to meet the increasing demand for food for a growing population. As a result, countries often resort to importing food, leading to increased expenditure on imports and reliance on external markets, which can be a burden on national budgets.

Inadequate agricultural productivity is closely linked to poverty and income generation in rural areas. The majority of small-scale farmers in Africa rely heavily on agriculture as their primary source of income. When productivity is low, farmers struggle to generate sufficient income to meet their basic needs and invest in their farms. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty and hinders rural development. To address the issue of insufficient agricultural productivity in Africa, various strategies and interventions are needed. First and foremost, improving farmers' access to modern technologies, including improved seeds, mechanized farming equipment, and efficient irrigation systems, is crucial. This requires investment in research and development, as well as policy support to promote the adoption of modern agricultural practices.There is a need to improve the resilience of farmers to climate change by implementing climate-smart agriculture practices. This includes the adoption of climate-resilient crops, water management techniques, and climate information services that enable farmers to make informed decisions about their agricultural activities.

6. **Inequality and social exclusion**: Inequality and social exclusion are significant challenges faced by many societies, including those in Africa. These issues manifest in various forms, including wide income disparities, discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or disability, and the marginalization of certain groups. These factors contribute to the persistence of poverty and hinder sustainable development efforts. Wide income disparities are a common characteristic of many African countries, where a small portion of the population controls a significant share of wealth and resources, while the majority struggle to make ends meet. This income inequality perpetuates a cycle of poverty and restricts opportunities for social mobility. The concentration

of wealth in the hands of a few creates disparities in access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, further exacerbating the divide between the rich and the poor. Discrimination is a significant contributor to inequality and social exclusion. Women, for instance, often face gender-based discrimination that limits their access to education, employment opportunities, and decision-making roles. This gender inequality not only hinders the empowerment and development of women but also negatively impacts broader social and economic progress. Ethnic minorities also face discriminatory practices, resulting in their marginalization and limited access to resources and opportunities. Furthermore, individuals with disabilities often experience exclusion and discrimination, leading to significant social and economic disadvantages.

The persistence of poverty and social exclusion has severe consequences for individuals, communities, and the overall development of African countries. Poverty, exacerbated by inequality and social exclusion, traps individuals and communities in a cycle of disadvantage and restricts their access to basic amenities such as education, healthcare, and sanitation. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break, leading to social unrest and instability. Moreover, inequality and social exclusion hinder inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. When certain population groups are excluded or marginalized, their potential contributions to the economy and society go untapped. This results in missed opportunities for innovation, productivity gains, and overall economic progress. Furthermore, social exclusion undermines social cohesion, leading to tensions and conflicts within communities and impeding broader social development. Efforts to address inequality and social exclusion require a multi-faceted approach. In terms of income disparities, progressive taxation policies can help redistribute wealth and create a more equitable society. Enhancing social protection programs, such as targeted cash transfers and social welfare schemes, can also provide a safety net for those most vulnerable to poverty.

7. **Political instability and conflict**: Political instability and conflict have profound impacts on a country's social, economic, and political well-being. Prolonged political instability and conflict not only disrupt the normal functioning of a society, but also have far-reaching consequences on economic activities, population displacement, and poverty reduction efforts. Firstly, economic activities suffer greatly in politically unstable and conflict-ridden environments. Investors are hesitant to commit to long-term investments due to the uncertainty and risk associated with unstable political conditions. Businesses struggle to operate efficiently as they face challenges such as damaged infrastructure, disruptions in supply chains, and insecurity for employees. Uncertain policies and frequent regime changes further dampen economic growth, as it becomes difficult to implement long-term development plans. This leads to a decrease in foreign direct investment, reduced domestic investment, and a decline in overall productivity. As a result, unemployment rates rise, poverty levels increase, and the economy stagnates or contracts. Political instability and conflict often lead to the displacement of populations, both internally and across borders. Displacement occurs when people are forced to flee their homes due to violence, threats, or persecution. Displaced populations face significant hardships such as loss of livelihoods, inadequate access to healthcare, education, and basic services. The strain on host communities and the pressure on limited resources can further exacerbate poverty and social tensions. Displaced people often end up in overcrowded and under-resourced refugee camps, where they may become reliant on humanitarian aid for survival. The overall humanitarian crisis

created by prolonged conflict and political instability contributes to a worsening poverty situation and hinders efforts aimed at poverty reduction.

Political instability and conflict challenge poverty reduction efforts directly. Governments facing persistent conflicts or political instability often prioritize security and defense spending over investments in sectors crucial for poverty reduction, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. Scarce resources that could have been allocated towards poverty-reduction programs are instead diverted to military expenditures or short-term conflict resolution measures. This limits the availability of funds for poverty reduction initiatives, further marginalizing vulnerable populations and perpetuating cyclical poverty. Political instability and conflict also undermine governance and the rule of law, resulting in corruption, weak institutions, and a lack of accountability. This can significantly hinder effective poverty reduction strategies and initiatives. Weak governance structures make it difficult to implement social welfare programs, income redistribution schemes, or enforce policies effectively. Corruption diverts funds meant for poverty alleviation, exacerbating inequality and hindering progress in poverty reduction efforts.

8. **Limited access to healthcare**: Limited access to healthcare is a significant challenge faced by many countries, particularly in rural areas and regions affected by political instability or conflict. Inadequate healthcare systems and limited access to healthcare services have far-reaching consequences on the overall well-being and economic prospects of individuals and communities. One of the key issues contributing to limited access to healthcare is the lack of healthcare infrastructure in rural areas. Many rural communities often lack essential healthcare facilities, such as hospitals, clinics, and trained medical professionals. The scarcity of healthcare facilities forces individuals to travel long distances, sometimes multiple hours, to seek medical attention, which can be a major obstacle, especially for those with limited financial resources or physical disabilities. The absence of healthcare infrastructure also hampers timely interventions and access to emergency medical services, increasing the risk of further complications and health disparities. Equally significant is the shortage or maldistribution of healthcare professionals, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. Skilled healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and specialists, tend to concentrate in urban centers, where there are better career prospects, higher salaries, and superior living conditions. This leaves rural communities with limited access to medical expertise. The lack of healthcare professionals in these areas not only delays medical assessments and treatments but also affects preventive care and health education initiatives that are crucial for disease prevention and general well-being.

Limited access to healthcare also stems from financial barriers and the high cost of medical services. In many countries, particularly those without universal healthcare systems, healthcare is linked to one's ability to pay. This often leaves low-income individuals and families unable to afford necessary medical treatments, medications, and preventive care. In such circumstances, people may delay seeking medical attention, leading to complications, long-term health issues, and increased healthcare costs in the future. Additionally, high out-of-pocket expenses can push individuals and families into a cycle of poverty, exacerbating existing economic disparities. The consequences of limited access to healthcare go beyond personal well-being and affect overall economic productivity. Poor health and untreated illnesses can result in decreased productivity, as individuals are unable to fully participate in economic activities. Furthermore, the burden of healthcare costs, including transportation expenses and the cost of medications, can act as a financial barrier, especially for those living in poverty. This prevents individuals from investing in income-generating activities or education, trapping them in a cycle of poverty and hindering economic development at both individual and community levels.

9. **Weak governance and corruption**: Weak governance and corruption have been persistent issues in many countries around the world, often hindering efforts to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. Corrupt practices, weak institutions, and inefficient governance systems undermine the effective implementation of poverty reduction measures, exacerbating socioeconomic inequalities and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Corruption, at its core, involves the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. It takes various forms, such as embezzlement, bribery, fraud, nepotism, and favoritism. In the context of poverty reduction, corruption diverts resources meant for public welfare and development projects into the hands of a few, denying the benefits of these resources to those in need. This misappropriation of funds hampers the provision of essential services, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, which are crucial for poverty alleviation. Weak governance systems and institutions often provide fertile ground for corruption to thrive. When governance structures lack transparency, accountability, and checks and balances, it becomes easier for individuals in positions of power to engage in corrupt practices without fear of consequences. Lack of accountability and transparency also erode public trust in government institutions, leading to a breakdown of social contract between the state and its citizens. This weakens the legitimacy of governments and undermines public support and participation in poverty reduction efforts.

Corruption not only diverts resources, but it also distorts policy-making processes. When public officials or politicians are influenced by bribery or undue political pressure, they may make decisions that prioritize personal or narrow interests over the collective welfare. This compromises the effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies as policies are no longer focused on the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Instead, they serve the interests of a few, perpetuating disparities and maintaining socioeconomic inequalities. Furthermore, corruption erodes the business environment and discourages foreign and domestic investments. Investors are less likely to invest in countries known for corruption, weak institutions, and lack of transparency, as it increases their exposure to financial risks and undermines the rule of law. Consequently, the lack of investment hampers economic growth, employment opportunities, and income generation, exacerbating poverty levels and hindering sustainable economic development.

Discussion of Findings

This paper examines the issue of poverty in Nigeria and its implications for social development. It uses a literature review methodology to explore various social policies and their impact on reducing poverty in Africa. The paper emphasizes that poverty involves a lack of essential resources like food, shelter, medical care, and safety, which are crucial for human dignity. It also highlights the relationship between poverty and the rise of terrorism and insurgency.

The study incorporates two theoretical frameworks, the Capability Approach and the Dependency Theory, to gain a comprehensive understanding of poverty reduction. These theories help to understand the complexities and dynamics of poverty by focusing on socio-economic disparities and dependencies.

The review of existing literature identifies numerous policies and programs implemented in Nigeria to address poverty, including the National Accelerated Food Production Project, Green Revolution, Agricultural Development Programme, and others.

The paper discusses the role of social policies in reducing poverty in Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria. It emphasizes the importance of improving the quality of life and well-being of citizens and highlights initiatives implemented by the Nigerian government, such as Universal Basic Education, Conditional Cash Transfer, National Health Insurance Scheme, and The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act.

Different approaches to poverty alleviation identified in previous research, such as the Economic Growth Approach, Basic Needs Approach, Rural Development Approach, and Target Approach, are explored in the paper. These approaches provide insights into the multifaceted nature of poverty and the need for tailored strategies to address specific issues.

Various poverty alleviation programs and strategies implemented in Nigeria are highlighted, including Compulsory and Free Education, Social Investment Programs, and National Health Insurance.

Lastly, the paper addresses the challenges affecting poverty reduction in Nigeria and Africa, such as high population growth, limited access to education, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, inequality, political instability, limited healthcare access, weak governance, and corruption.

Recommendation:

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that poverty reduction in Nigeria and other countries in Africa require a multi-faceted and comprehensive approach. To effectively address this issue, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Social Policies:** The Nigerian government should further prioritize the implementation and enforcement of social policies aimed at poverty reduction. This includes investing in initiatives such as Universal Basic Education, Conditional Cash Transfer, and the National Health Insurance Scheme, as well as enacting and enforcing legislation such as The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act. The government should allocate sufficient resources and coordinate efforts to ensure the effective implementation of these policies.

2. **Diversify Economic Growth:** While economic growth is crucial for poverty reduction, it is important to ensure that the benefits of growth are distributed equitably. The government should implement policies that promote inclusive growth, focusing on sectors such as agriculture, rural development, and small-scale industries. Additionally, efforts should be made to reduce unemployment and underemployment by creating job opportunities and supporting entrepreneurship.

3. **Improve Access to Education**: Limited access to quality education is a significant barrier to poverty reduction. The Nigerian government should prioritize the provision of compulsory and free education, ensuring that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal opportunities for education. Furthermore, investments should be made in improving infrastructure and teacher quality to enhance the overall education system.

4. **Enhance Infrastructure Development:** Inadequate infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and water supply, hinders economic growth and perpetuates poverty. The government should prioritize infrastructure development, especially in rural areas, to promote economic activities, improve accessibility, and enhance the living conditions of the population. Public-private partnerships can be explored to leverage resources and expertise for infrastructure projects.

5. **Address Governance and Corruption:** Weak governance and corruption have a significant impact on poverty reduction efforts. The Nigerian government should strengthen institutional frameworks, promote transparency, and enhance accountability in all sectors. Anti-corruption measures should be rigorously enforced, and public officials held accountable for their actions. This will create a conducive environment for poverty reduction initiatives and ensure that resources are utilized effectively and efficiently.

6. **Foster Regional and International Cooperation:** Poverty reduction is a global challenge that requires collaborative efforts. The Nigerian government should actively engage with regional and international partners to share experiences, exchange best practices, and seek financial and technical support. Regional organizations, such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, can play a crucial role in facilitating cooperation and coordination in poverty reduction efforts.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can make significant strides towards reducing poverty and improving the well-being of its citizens. However, it is important to continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures, and make necessary adjustments as required. Sustainable poverty reduction requires long-term commitment, dedication, and collaborative efforts from all stakeholders involved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, poverty remains a significant challenge to social development, exacerbated by factors such as terrorism and insurgency. This paper has explored the role of social policies in poverty reduction in Africa, with a focus on Nigeria. Through a comprehensive literature review, it has been revealed that Nigeria has implemented various initiatives to address poverty, including the National Accelerated Food Production Project and the Conditional Cash Transfer program. Additionally, the paper has identified different approaches to poverty alleviation, such as economic growth, basic needs, rural development, and targeted approaches. Finally, the paper has highlighted the issues and challenges that affect poverty reduction in Nigeria, including high population growth, limited access to education, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and political instability. Addressing these challenges and implementing effective social policies are crucial steps towards reducing poverty and improving the well-being of the population in Nigeria and other countries in Africa.

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