IJAAR PUBLISHING®

Open Access Journal of Social Sciences Research
Vol. 1, Issue 2 (July-September, 2023) | www.ijaar.org

ALIENATION AND POVERTY IN NIGERIA: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

CHINEDU P. BOSAH, Ph.D AND PROF. B.O.G. NWANOLUE

ABSTRACT

One of the most pathetic features of the Nigerian economy today is that a majority of its populace is living in a state of destitution while the remaining relatively insignificant minority is living in affluence. These skewed economic relations do not reflect the geographical spread of resource endowment in Nigeria. Over the years, various administrations have undertaken different economic policies and programmes with the aim of reducing, if not totally eradicating, poverty in Nigeria. These programmes were expected to at least raise the standard of living of Nigerians yet many are still economically alienated. Either these programmes are the causes of poverty themselves or that their implementations have the tendency of engendering poverty and widening economic inequality in Nigeria. This paper therefore investigated economic alienation and poverty in Nigeria with focus on Buhari's administration economic policies. The objective is to determine how government policies have alienated the people and orchestrated poverty in Nigeria. This paper is qualitative in nature and adopted explanatory research design. Among other theories of alienation and poverty, Capability Deprivation Theory served as the theoretical framework of analysis. This paper argues that Buhari's administration has compounded the nation's economic problems by pursuing economic policies that have triggered inflation, rise in PMS pump price, and hike in electric tariff in addition to already existing stagnation, thereby engendering poverty in the land. Many of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan projections for 2019 were never met. Among others, the study recommends that the federal government should adopt economic policies that are attainable, inclusive and sustainable, especially while formulating poverty alleviation programmes. This means embracing democratic governance that is sincere, accountable, practicable and inclusive in nature, as this will lead to a proper functioning of the institutions of governance and bring about equitable distribution of wealth and income. Economic policies of government should also be examined and measured from their inclusiveness and sustainability.

Key words: Alienation, Poverty, and Poverty Alleviation.

Published*28/07/2023*
Bosah, C.P. & Nwanolue, B.O.G. (2023). Alienation And Poverty In Nigeria: A Theoretical Perspective. *Open Access Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 1(2), 17-35.

Introduction

One of the unfortunate features of the Nigerian economy today is that a majority of its populace is living in a state of destitution while the remaining relatively insignificant minority is living in affluence. These skewed economic relations do not reflect the geographical spread of resources endowment.

Poverty, which has no geographical boundary, is seen in all part of the country, rural and urban areas inclusive. Although the incidence of poverty is much higher in the rural areas than in the urban centers, the urban slum-dwellers form one of the more deprived groups in Nigeria. The poor are those who are unable to obtain an adequate income, find a stable job, own property or maintain healthy living conditions. They also lack an adequate level of education and cannot satisfy their basic health needs. (Ogwumike, 1987)

Poverty in Nigeria is found among four identifiable economic group namely the rural landless, the small farmers, the urban under-employed and the unemployed. Generally, the poor are dis-proportionately located in rural areas and slums in urban areas. These are areas of the city distinguished by their advanced stage of physical degradation and occupied by individuals believed to be experiencing various forms of social deprivation like unemployment and inadequate welfare services. The trend in both rural and urban poverty in Nigeria, though fluctuated over the years has been on a worsening trend. Relatively the depth and severity of extreme poverty increased rapidly in urban than in rural areas. The problem has been traced to the high population growth rates and rural-urban migration that has made the quality of life in urban slums worse while urban services and infrastructures are over stretched. Pathetic enough, the World Bank rated Nigeria as the 137th in the world while the United Nations Development Programme rated Nigeria as the 10th poorest country in the world in 2004 (Gafaar & Osinubi, 2005). The challenges of poverty in Nigeria have attracted the attention of successive administrations.

However, it remains a paradox-poverty in the midst of plenty and rising in periods of economic growth (Omoyibo, 2013). This may be true to the extent that Nigeria is endowed with human and natural resources and has had an increasing national income; yet, a larger section of her population languishes in poverty due to uneven distribution and allocation of income and wealth (Aigbokhan, 1998; Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Lipton, 1980). Dauda (2017) note that poverty in Nigeria differs with the pattern in many other countries given that even with the economic growth recorded, poverty is still on the increase with the North- West and North –East geopolitical zones leading in the poverty indices. This situation is at variance with the experiences of developing countries in Europe, America and Asia where economic growth results in poverty reduction (Jhingan, 2007). This lends credence to the long-standing assumption that the relationship between poverty, economic growth and development is not even. Several poverty reduction policies and programmes have been adopted to alleviate or eradicate poverty in Nigeria. Some of these were sectoral interventions but their goal was poverty reduction (Oshewolo, 2010). Notable poverty reduction programmes pursued in Nigeria include:

-Operation Feed the Nation (Agriculture)

- Free and Compulsory Primary Education (Education)

- Green Revolution (Agriculture)

-Low Cost Housing

-River Basin Development Authorities (Agriculture)

-National Agricultural Land Development Authority (Agriculture)

-Agricultural Development Programmes (Agriculture)

- Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (Agriculture)

-Strategic Grains, Reserves Programme (Agriculture)

-Rural Electrification Scheme (Rural Development)

-Rural Banking Programme (Rural development and financial inclusion)

-Family Economic Advancement Programme (Poverty Alleviation)

-Better Life for Rural Women (Women Empowerment)

-Family Support Programme (Poverty Alleviation)

-National Directorate of Employment (Job Creation)

-Mass Transit Programme (Transport)

-Guinea Worm Eradicating Programme (Health)

-Petroleum Trust Fund (Education, Health, Rural Development)

-National Poverty Eradication Programme (Poverty Alleviation)

-National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)

Even with this wide array of programmes, poverty alleviation has remained a mirage in Nigeria.

Arisi-Nwugballa, Elom, and Onyeizugbe (2016) opine that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and post-SAP eras in Nigeria were characterized by active government intervention in poverty alleviation initiatives with significant improvement in living standards. Ihonvbere (1993) disputes this claim by asserting that SAP removed all the social benefits and welfare services previously enjoyed by the generality of the masses. Anyanwu (1992, p. 5) also berates SAP for promoting the emergence of an ‘unregulated and dependent capitalist development model, while allowing only a supportive role for the government in a refurbished economic environment of highly reduced government ownership and control of enterprises’. He suggested that SAP allowed poverty and inflation to flourish by the removal of subsidies on petroleum products and fertilizer, trade liberalization, deregulation, privatization and commercialization.

Many reasons have been given for the abysmal performance of poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria- poor design and implementation, policy inconsistencies and discontinuity, poor funding and corruption (Aigbokhan, 2008; Arisi-Nwugballa et al., 2016; Dauda, 2017; Elumilade, Asaolu, & Adereti, 2006) . Arisi-Nwugballa et al. (2016) note that poverty alleviation initiatives tend to be geared towards providing financial credit and grants to drive the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) leading to job creation and capacity utilization. Some of these interventions enhanced the incomes of the target beneficiaries engaged in MSMEs but this could not be sustained due to obstacles such as the high cost of running businesses, infrastructural decay and competition caused by the proliferation of cheaper imported substitutes. The articulation of government policies and programmes to spur innovations, entrepreneurship, infrastructural development and improved welfare has proven to be inadequate to address the poverty situation in Nigeria.

The causes of persistent poverty and the impact of these programmes on alleviating poverty has been contentious. Some studies in Nigeria have argued to the contrary, that the poor has benefited more from these policies (Obadan, 1994; Faruquee, 1994; Canagarajah, et al., 1997). But Aigbokhan (2000) found that there was positive real growth throughout the period of his study, 1980 to 1997, yet poverty and inequality still worsened. This negates the principle of the "trickle down" phenomenon underlying the view that growth improves poverty and inequality, and this can be traced to the nature of these economic policies. It is in this respect that this study evaluates economic alienation as the main cause of poverty in Nigeria with particular focus on Buhari's first term economic policies and poverty alleviation programmes.

Definition of terms

Poverty

Poverty is not only a term that is commonly used by the generality of the people but also one that has no specialized content as a concept. Besides, it is multi-dimensional socioeconomic and cultural situation that transcends economic description and analysis. In addition, poverty is both concrete and relative. For any particular society, poverty and the poor are very concrete phenomena and can be easily identified. Yet it is also relative: the population that may be classified as poor in a develop economy would be regarded as materially well off in least developed countries.

Perceptions of and about poverty have not only evolved historical but also vary tremendously from culture to culture. The criteria for distinguishing the poor from the non-poor tend to reflect national normative concepts and priorities. And as countries become wealthier, their perceptions of acceptable deprivations change. For poverty and deprivation go hand in hand, poverty manifest itself in deprivation of the lives of people.

Being multidimensional, poverty takes different forms or typologies of which three broad ones can identified as follows: Physiological deprivation, Social deprivation and Human freedom deprivation the incidence of poverty (head count) is to be distinguished from the depth, the breath and severity of poverty. And all these are not to be confused with inequality.

Poverty Alleviation

Attempts to eradicate or mitigate poverty are not new; legislation and community efforts to assist the poor are reported at least as far back as biblical times. Poverty exists and has existed in every country, and the struggle against poverty has been just as widespread (Lander, 1993). Poverty reduction lies at the heart of development discourse and practice (Jackson 1997). Approaches to poverty alleviation require the implementation, of mutually consistent and reinforcing multifaceted packages of policies plans and programmes.

Alienation

Alienation is a theoretical concept developed by Karl Marx that describes the isolating, dehumanizing, and disenchanting effects of working within a capitalist system of production. Karl Marx's theory of alienation also describes the social alienation of people from aspects of their human nature as a consequence of living in a society of stratified social classes. The alienation from the self is a consequence of being a mechanistic part of a social class, the condition of which estranges a person from their humanity.

The theoretical basis of alienation within the capitalist mode of production is that the worker invariably loses the ability to determine life and destiny when deprived of the right to think (conceive) of themselves as the director of their own actions; to determine the character of said actions; to define relationships with other people; and to own those items of value from goods and services, produced by their own labour. Although the worker is an autonomous, self-realized human being, as an economic entity this worker is directed to goals and diverted to activities that are dictated by the bourgeoisie—who own the means of production—in order to extract from the worker the maximum amount of surplus value in the course of business competition among industrialists.

In a capitalist society, the worker's alienation from their humanity occurs because the worker can express labour—a fundamental social aspect of personal individuality—only through a private system of industrial production in which each worker is an instrument: i.e., a thing, not a person. In the "Comment on James Mill" (1844), Marx explained alienation thus:

Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have, in two ways, affirmed himself, and the other person. (i) In my production I would have objectified my individuality, its specific character, and, therefore, enjoyed not only an individual manifestation of my life during the activity, but also, when looking at the object, I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective, visible to the senses, and, hence, a power beyond all doubt. (ii) In your enjoyment, or use, of my product I would have the direct enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a human need by my work, that is, of having objectified man's essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another man's essential nature ... Our products would be so many mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature.

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* ,Marx identified four types of alienation that occur to the worker labouring under a capitalist system of industrial production. They are alienation of the worker from their product, from the act of production, from their *Gattungswesen* ('species-essence') and from other workers.

The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement. But the former class feels at ease and strengthened in this self-estrangement, it

recognizes estrangement as its own power, and has in it the semblance of a human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated, this means that they cease to exist in estrangement; it sees in it its own powerlessness and in the reality of an inhuman existence. It is, to use an expression of Hegel, in its abasement, the indignation at that abasement, an indignation to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human nature and its condition of life, which is the outright, resolute and comprehensive negation of that nature. Within this antithesis, the private property-owner is therefore the conservative side, and the proletarian the destructive side. From the former arises the action of preserving the antithesis, from the latter the action of annihilating it.

Problems of poverty in Nigeria

Economic alienation in Nigeria has over time coalesced to make it the poverty capital of the world. Yet the country has an expanding economy with abundant human capital and the economic potential to lift millions out of poverty.

The combined wealth of Nigeria's five richest men-$29.9billion- could end extreme poverty in Nigeria yet many are facing hunger daily. More than 112 million people are living in poverty in Nigeria, yet the country's richest man would have to spend $1 million a day for 42 years to exhaust his fortune. The annual earnings from his wealth is sufficient to lift 2million people out of poverty for one year (Dauda, 2017). Government make policies that leave capital only in the hands of the few and there is no equitable distribution of infrastructure and wealth to balance the gap.

Women represent between 60 and 79 percent of Nigeria rural labour force but are five times less likely to own their own land than men. Women are also less likely to have had a decent education. Overt three quarter of the poorest women in Nigeria have never been to school and 94% are illiterates (Dike, 2010)

Between 1960 and 2005, about $20trillion was stolen from the treasury by public office holders. In 2012 GDP of the United States was about $18trillion, a lot lower than what was stolen. Poverty and inequality in Nigeria are not due to lack of resources but to ill use, misallocation and misappropriation of such resources. At the root is the culture of corruption combined with political elite out of touch with the daily struggles of average Nigerians (Omoyibo, 2013).

In 2012, Nigeria spent just 6.5 percent of its national budget on education and just 3.5 percent on health. By comparison, Ghana spent 18.5 percent and 12.8 percent respectively in 2015). As a result, 57million Nigerians lack safe water, over 130million lack adequate sanitation and the country has more than 10million children out of school. Another consequence of the mismanagement of the nation's resources is the high rate of unemployment, especially among the young, in 2016, 12.1 and 21.5% of Nigeria's youth were without a job (Omoyibo, 2013).

Indeed, economic models have been driving and exacerbating inequality and injustice. Across countries and regions, people are denied the ability to shape their future. Neoliberal policies and gross capitalism have eroded democratic governance and concentrated power in the hands of a few to the detriment of the ordinary people and in particular the poorest and the most marginalized.

Economies around the world have valued GDP growth more than other aspects of national development. But in 2020, nearly half of humanity are living below the poverty line trying to survive on $5.50 per day. Economic growth alone especially where it is not inclusive will not beat poverty (Ogbulu, 2009).

Extractive economic models are driving a global climate crisis that is changing the environment and forcing an ever growing number of people from their homes. For millions it means loss of livelihoods, ecosystems, identity and wellbeing in particular in communities that are the least responsible but the most impacted.

Rapidly expanding cities, unregulated labour markets, and an increasing rural-urban have trapped millions in downward spiral of poverty and injustice. In Nigeria, corporations and wealthy elites have captured politics, the media and educational institutions. Increasing privatization of sectors such as water, health and education often undermines equal access to quality essential services.

Violence based on gender remains one of the most common abuses of human rights in Nigeria. In many communities women and girls are denied their full potentials and forced to accept unpaid and low paid and unvalued works. Patriarchy policies not only lead to exclusion and exploitation, they often marginalize women, girls and people with disabilities or without an education, it makes these people to live and work in the shadows, unable to claim their economic, social and political rights, hiding from deep-seated attitudes of prejudice and where they live in poverty, unable to build a better life for themselves.

This alienation of individuals and groups whether based on sex, ethnicity, class or social relations of production are growing and creating disillusionment and polarizing opinions. Social tensions are made worse by competition over scarce resources and environmental or economic fragility.

Put succinctly, economic alienation is characterized by uneven and in some circumstances, total denial of distribution of power, resources and opportunities among peoples and groups based on such divides as, class, caste, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, education, geography, gender and sexual orientation. It means abundance for the few and injustice for the many. It keeps poor people poor and powerless and denies millions their rights. It acknowledges the multiple dimensions of inequality and consistently asks who does and who does not have access to power, resources and opportunities and why.

Poverty is not just about wealth but the multiple deprivations that impoverished people experience daily. This includes lack of access to resources, opportunities and quality basic services, poor working conditions-inadequate living standards, living in environmentally hazardous areas, the threat of violence and conflict, an increasing digital divide and lack of power over decisions that impact them.

Economic alienation and its resultant effect are multi-dimensional. Its different manifestations are created and sustained by the combination of patriarchy and unjust political economic systems. Their interaction is the root cause of alienation, poverty and injustice. Consequently, in recognition of these challenges, various administrations and the private sector such as financial institutions have articulated and implemented economic policies and programmes to address the observed inequality and poverty conundrums. The goal of these poverty alleviation programmes is to uphold people’s right to universal essential services

including quality health care, water, education and social protection, rights of workers, decent living, etc.

Thus, poverty has not been addressed in all its dimensions. This, however, is not to deny the fact that economic growth can be a powerful means of reducing poverty. The failure to pursue a holistic approach to poverty alleviation and eradication has inevitably led to the aggravation of poverty. The neglect of social exclusion, lack of participatory poverty alleviation and denial of personal and community freedom has not lead to a major breakthrough in the overarching objective of exiting from poverty.

Theoretical Perspectives of Poverty and Alienation in Nigeria

Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) was a German philosopher who endorsed the idea that socialism, and eventually communism, would succeed capitalism as the ultimate economic system. Throughout his academic career, Marx's Capital (1873) provides one of the most comprehensive sets of criticisms against capitalism. The term "Marxism" was popularized by Karl Kautsky, (George, 2010). Marxism analyzes the material conditions and the economic activities required to fulfill human material needs to explain social phenomena within any given society.

It assumes that the form of economic organization, or mode of production, influences all other social phenomena—including wider social relations, political institutions, legal systems, cultural systems, aesthetics, and ideologies. The economic system and these social relations form a base and superstructure. Also, according to Aja Akpuru-Aja (2013) in his book Theory and Practice of Marxism in a world in transition; the premise of Marxism is that social existence or economic condition of people is the sole determinant of man's life, ideals, beliefs and value judgment. On this note, Marx notes that man must first eat, clothe and shelter himself before he talks about politics, culture and ideology. He seeks to employ the theory of dialectical materialism to map out and explain the logic of class, class struggle and conflict resolution in the direction of social change. However, Aja does not see socialism or even communism succeeding capitalism as the ultimate economic system in a fast changing world order. He agrees that capitalism is already gaining the center stage in today's world economic system.

As forces of production, i.e. technology, improve, existing forms of organizing production become obsolete and hinder further progress. As Karl Marx observed: "At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters, then begins an era of social revolution. These inefficiencies manifest themselves as social contradictions in society which are, in turn, fought out at the level of the class struggle (Gregory and Staurth 2003). Under the capitalist mode of production, this struggle materializes between the minority (the bourgeoisie) who own the means of production and the vast majority of the population (the proletariat) who produce goods and services. Starting with the conjectural premise that social change occurs because of the struggle between different classes within society who are under contradiction against each other, a Marxist would conclude that capitalism exploits and oppresses the proletariat, therefore capitalism will inevitably lead

to a proletarian revolution. Marxists maintains that poverty, like wealth, is an inevitable consequence of a capitalist society. Marxists argue that poverty benefits the ruling class, as it ensures that there is always a workforce willing to accept low wages. Similarly, the existence of unemployment and job insecurity means that there is always a 'reserve army of labour' able and willing (or, unable to be unwilling!) to take their place if they are not happy. Capitalism and the bourgeoisie therefore benefit from the existence of poverty (Cunningham, 2007). It is not simply that there are rich and poor. It is rather that some are rich because some are poor (Kincaid, 1973). Marxian economics and its proponents view capitalism, as economically unsustainable and incapable of improving the living standards of the population due to its need to compensate for falling rates of profit by cutting employee's wages, social benefits and pursuing military aggression. The socialist system would succeed capitalism as humanity's mode of production through workers' revolution. According to Marxian conflict theory, socialism is not only inevitability, but an economic necessity.

Progressive Social Theory

Proponents of this theory do not view individuals as the source of poverty but economic, political and social distortions as well as discrimination, which limit opportunities and resources to create wealth and overcome poverty. The 19th century social theorists waged a full attack on the individual theory of poverty by exploring how social and economic systems overrode and created individual poverty situations. They analyze how the economic system of capitalism created a reserve army of the unemployed as a deliberate strategy to keep wages low (Bradshaw, 2016). They argue that people may work hard and have acceptable attitudes but still be in the poverty trap because of dysfunctional social and economic systems.

The theory ascribes poverty to economic, social and political structures that make the poor fall behind regardless of how committed they may be. Another category of system flaws associated with poverty relates to groups of people being discriminated against based on personal attributes such as race, gender, disability and religion, which limit their opportunities in spite of their personal capabilities.

Relative Deprivation Theory

According to (Townsend,1979), the first rigorous treatment of the concept of relative deprivation is found in Runciman (1966). In simple terms, Relative Deprivation is the lack of resources to sustain the diet, lifestyle, activities and amenities that an individual or group are accustomed to or that are widely encouraged or approved in the society to which they belong,. Measuring relative deprivation allows an objective comparison between the situation of the individual or group compared to the rest of society. Relative deprivation may also emphasize the individual experience of discontent when being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled, however emphasizing the perspective of the individual makes objective measurement problematic, (Walker L, Heather J. Smith, 2001)

Deprivation Theory is that people who are deprived of things deemed valuable in society, money, justice, status or privilege, join social movements with the hope of redressing their grievances. That is a beginning point for looking at why people join social movements; however, it is even more important to look at relative deprivation theory, a belief that people

join social movement based on their evaluations of what they think they should have, compared with what others have. On the contrary, absolute deprivation is people's actual negative condition; relative deprivation is what people think they should have relative to what others have, or even compared with their own past or perceived future. Improved conditions fuel human desires for even better conditions and so can spark revolutions.

Feelings of deprivation are relative, as they come from a comparison to social norms that are not absolute and usually differ from time and place. This differentiates relative deprivation from objective deprivation (also known as absolute deprivation or absolute poverty) - a condition that applies to all underprivileged people. This leads to an important conclusion: while the objective deprivation (poverty) in the world may change over time, relative deprivation will not, as long as social inequality persists and some humans are better off than others.

Social Exclusion Theory (Red Lenoir 1970)

Social exclusion or **social Marginalization** is the social disadvantage and relegation to the fringe of society. It is a term used widely in Europe and was first used in France. It is used across disciplines including education, sociology, psychology, politics and economics.

Social exclusion is the process in which individuals are blocked from (or denied full access to) various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of a different group, and which are fundamental to social integration and observance of human rights within that particular group (e.g., housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation, and due process).

Alienation or disenfranchisement resulting from social exclusion can be connected to a person's social class, race, skin color, religious affiliation, ethnic origin, educational status, childhood relationships, living standards, and or political opinions, and appearance. Such exclusionary forms of discrimination may also apply to people with a disability, minorities, drug users, institutional care leavers, the elderly and the young. Anyone who appears to deviate in any way from perceived norms of a population may thereby become subject to coarse or subtle forms of social exclusion.

The outcome of social exclusion is that affected individuals or communities are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live. This may result in resistance in the form of demonstrations, protests or lobbying from the excluded people.

The concept of social exclusion has led to the researcher’s conclusion that in many European countries the impact of social disadvantages, that influence the well-being of all people, including with special needs, has an increasingly negative impact.

Most of the characteristics listed here are present together in studies of social exclusion, due to exclusion's multidimensionality.

Another way of articulating the definition of social exclusion is as follows:

Social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live.

In an alternative conceptualization, social exclusion theoretically emerges at the individual or group level on four correlated dimensions: insufficient access to social rights, material deprivation, limited social participation and a lack of normative integration. It is then regarded as the combined result of personal risk factors (age, gender, race); macro-societal

changes (demographic, economic and labor market developments, technological innovation, the evolution of social norms); government legislation and social policy; and the actual behavior of businesses, administrative organizations and fellow citizens.

2.2.7 Capability Deprivation Theory

According to Amartya Sen, Capability Deprivation Theory indicates a weak state of capability or some form of capability suffering. Those without adequate capabilities cannot function as healthy and creative human beings and thus are considered to be capability deprived. Propounded by Amartya Sen, development is seen as a process of enhancing people's capabilities by expanding people's freedoms. In this approach, poverty is seen as a situation where people lack the most basic capabilities to lead a reasonable life. Poverty is not just relative, but absolute. Poverty is a failure to achieve certain minimum capability.

The **capability approach** (also referred to as the **capabilities approach**) is a normative approach to human welfare that concentrates on the actual capability of persons to achieve their well-being rather than on their mere right or freedom to do so (Robeyns, 2016). It was conceived in the 1980s as an alternative approach to welfare economics. In this approach, Amartya Sen

brought together a range of ideas that were previously excluded from (or inadequately formulated in) traditional approaches to the economics of welfare. The core focus of the capability approach is on what individuals are able to do (i.e., capable of).

Initially, Sen argued for five components in assessing capability:

1. The importance of real freedoms in the assessment of a person's advantage

2. Individual differences in the ability to transform resources into valuable activities

3. The multi-variate nature of activities giving rise to happiness

4. A balance of materialistic and non-materialistic factors in evaluating human welfare

5. Concern for the distribution of opportunities within society

Subsequently, and in collaboration particularly with political philosopher Martha Nussbaum, development economist Sudhir Anand and economic theorist James Foster, Sen has helped to make the capabilities approach predominant as a paradigm for policy debate in human development where it inspired the creation of the UN's Human Development Index (a popular measure of human development, capturing capabilities in health, education, and income). In addition, the approach has been operationalised with a high income country focus by Paul Anand and colleagues (Anan et al 2009). Furthermore, since the creation of the Human Development and Capability Association in the early 2000s, the approach has been much discussed by political theorists, philosophers, and a range of social scientists, including those with a particular interest in human health.

The approach emphasizes functional capabilities ("substantive freedoms", such as the ability to live to old age, engage in economic transactions, or participate in political activities); these

are construed in terms of the substantive freedoms people have reason to value, instead of utility (happiness, desire-fulfillment or choice) or access to resources (income, commodities, assets). Poverty is understood as capability-deprivation. It is noteworthy that the emphasis is not only on how humans actually function but also on their having the capability, which is a practical choice, "to achieve outcomes that they value and have reason to value" (Sen, 2001). Everyone could be deprived of such capabilities in many ways, e.g. by ignorance, government oppression, lack of financial resources, or false consciousness.

This approach to human well-being emphasizes the importance of freedom of choice, individual heterogeneity and the multi-dimensional nature of welfare. In significant respects, the approach is consistent with the handling of choice within conventional microeconomics consumer theory, although its conceptual foundations enable it to acknowledge the existence of claims, like rights, which normatively dominate utility-based claims (Sen, 1979).

Indices of poverty include, Lack of shelter, Limited access to clean water resources, Food insecurity, Physical disabilities, Lack of access to health care, Unemployment, Absence of social services, Gender discrimination, Lack of access to credit.

The relevance of this theory is that poverty has been defined as situation where people lack the most basic capabilities to function. Amartya Sen sees development as a process of enhancing peoples' capability by expanding their real freedoms.

Thus, the European union has decided that the poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of people whose resources (material, culture, social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life.

Capability deprivation theory falls within the progressive social theories. Theorists in this tradition look not on the individual as source of poverty, but to the economic, political and social system which causes people to have limited opportunities and resources with which to achieve income and wellbeing (Yoon and Hirschl, 2003). Capability deprivation theory focused on who loses out at the economic game. This paper agrees with Marx who showed how the economic system of capitalism created the "reserved army of unemployed" as a conscientious strategy to keep wages low.

This paper also argues that the economic system is structured in such a way that poor people fall behind regardless of how competent they may be. Looking at the minimum wage of average civil servant in Nigeria and humongous and allowances and salaries of national assembly members one cannot but see the disparity in distribution. Lack of basic infrastructure that should aid the standard of living in the rural dwellers is another case in point. The great cost of governance which necessitated corruption in the high places stares us on the face. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria has remained unabated. We argue that until there is justice in the distribution of resources and basic amenities of life, the poor shall continue to be economically shortchanged.

Alienation and Poverty in Nigeria

Government policies may be adopted in pursuit of good intentions, but poor implementation could impoverish the citizens. The SAP and its various fallouts in the form of massive devaluation of the Naira, high inflation, factory closures, privatization, commercialization,

appropriate pricing of petroleum products and unlimited free market contributed to the poverty situation. There is strong correlation between the character of governance and the degree of poverty in Nigeria (Omoyibo, 2013). Onyishi and Ezeibe (2014, p. 2) further explain that: In Nigeria, after the attainment of flag independence, ubiquitous state involvement in the emergent national economy took on even greater dimension. The incipient oil-economy provided further impetus as the resources available to the public multiplied almost geometrically. State power and positions were now increasingly seen as the most viable and rapid avenues for acquisition of private capitals.

Thus, state positions offered greater attraction to Nigerians, as experience had shown that they became the surest means to riches, affluence and prestige in the Nigerian society. To this extent, state power became wealth and wealth an efficacious pathway to power. The structure of Nigeria's economy has also worsened the poverty situation. Its productive base is narrow and undiversified with the economy largely dependent on oil revenue while other critical sectors are neglected. This situation has hampered economic growth and capacity utilization leading to macroeconomic instability and poverty. Inadequate provision of social and economic infrastructure by government has also led to deterioration of the standard of living and contributed to poverty in Nigeria. Failure to invest in the power sector resulting in high cost of production and high prices of locally manufactured goods has led to collapse of the manufacturing sector. Similarly, the country has lost her international market share in agricultural exports due to neglect and removal of incentives that drive growth in the agricultural sector. Nigeria has great potential for massive job creation, expansion of markets and industrialization given her human and natural resources but remains limited by structural distortions and lack of the will to bring about progressive change on the part of successive governments. Misplacement of priorities by governments at all levels manifesting in wasteful expenditure rather than investment in critical sectors that have direct bearing on the standard of living, has aggravated poverty in Nigeria.

Policies relating to empowerment of women and equal rights for the disabled have contributed to poverty. Bias, discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion, and non-adherence to principles of true federalism and federal character in appointments and projects distribution have led to many ethno-religious conflicts and social unrests in Nigeria resulting in wanton destruction of lives and property thereby worsening the poverty situation of the country

In Nigeria, the state is a key factor in the political economy; it determines the direction of production, distribution and allocation of resources. The fragile production base and the resultant social forces of production have not been able to support any socio-political transformation that would engineer collective mass action of an active society. And the state has been a factor that not only helping in preserving the private bourgeois structures by this act but perhaps also help in modifying them (Vajda, 1981:73). This indicates that the social contract with the Nigerian state has failed because, it works and entrench the interest of elite class. As Marx pointed out, **"***the state is but the management of the common affairs of the bourgeoisie".* As state institutions are parts of the super-structure determined by the interests of the dominant class. The state then becomes an instrument of the ruling class as defined in terms of control over the means of production. In Nigeria, according to John Campbell, a former American Ambassador to Nigeria (1998-2000), those that hold power do not want it to change, they want to hold on to it to impoverish the people so as to determine and define the waves and directions of politics, since they do not have jobs, factory or industry, politics is the only job they can do best.

In this present Nigerian society, there have been lamentations of oppressions, exploitation and dehumanization. Nigerians are exploited by fellow Nigerians, hence, M. I. Akimbo exclaimed, "We have done very estimable evil to ourselves in this land". Thus, a lot of thinkers now term Nigerian workers as alienated beings. The question, which seems to be cropping up, is whether some Nigerians are really alienated and marginalized? (Anyanwu, 1992).

The phenomenon of poverty has become so endemic in Nigeria to the extent that all recent statistics point in the direction that a greater proportion of the Nigerian population lives in poverty. High poverty rate in Nigeria has been attributed to a number of factors including inept leadership that breeds monumental corruption in all facets of life. Corruption ensures that the wealth of the nation is not equitably distributed among its citizens leading to very high level of inequality. Few people have appropriated far more than their fair of the commonwealth thereby pushing the majority of the people to the margin of society. Poverty in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the fact that the poor do not have any voice in the political process.

The poverty level in Nigeria is assuming a very worrisome dimension as more and more Nigerians drift towards the margin of society. This situation was aptly captured by the World Bank President Jim Yong Kim at the IMF/World Bank spring meeting held in April, 2014 where he restated that Nigeria is one the five countries that have the highest number of poor people. Nigeria according to him ranks third in the world behind India and China. The Director-General of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) stated in his written press conference address in 2011 that about 112 million Nigerians were living in poverty (Punch Editorial, 2014). Five years down the line, the situation instead of improving is even getting worse. The current Vice President of Nigeria Mr Yemi Osinbajo in August, 2015 stated that over 100 million Nigerians were still living below poverty line despite the policies of past governments to improve their welfare. He further stated that the policies were wrongly formulated and as a result did not have direct impact on the people.

The condition of the Nigerian working class is close to that described by Marx. He postulates that laws are made by the ruling class to continue the oppression of the working class. This seems to be the situation in Nigeria, where the laws protecting the workers have loopholes, and then allow for its arbitrary interpretation. The law mandates a fourty-hour work weekly, two to four weeks annual leave, overtime and holiday pay (Yusuf, 1986). However, there is no law prohibiting excessive compulsory overtime. The same law requires employers to compensate injured workers and dependent survivors of those killed in industrial accidents. The ministry of labour, which is supposed to enforce these laws, has been ineffective in identifying violators and addressing violations. The labour decree did not provide workers with the right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations without loss of employment.

This has resulted in a situation, which Marx did not predict: migration of workers to countries with a favourable working condition. In the United States, about twenty thousand Nigerian doctors work there (Gboyega, 1996). A look back at the 1970's and 1980's will show that there was a distinct increase in Nigerians emigrating abroad. If we are to retain our highly qualified work force, then we need to develop a compensation package, which all actually encourage them to stay at home. We are facing a scenario where Nigeria graduates remain unemployed for three to four years and then decide to leave Nigeria to work in Europe. There they do jobs for which they are over qualified (Ohiorhenuan, 1989).

Child labour, itself remains an unsolved riddle. The law prohibits employment of children less than fifteen years of age in commerce and industry (Muntember, 1989). But it allowed the apprenticeship of children from the age of thirteen under certain conditions. Economic hardships resulted in high number of children in commercial activities aimed at enhancing meager family income. Children are frequently empowered as beggars, hawkers and conductors in urban areas. Even the use of children as domestic servants is rampant (Olukoshi, 1998) There were occasioned reports of forced child labour**.**

Government Policies and Alienation /Poverty.

The loud consensus right now is that President Buhari's policies are not working and that come 2023 when he quits the stage he would have left Nigerians in an even worse condition than he met them in 2015. Nigerians point to the inflation that is presently ravaging the economy, the insecurity that has gripped the country and the corruption that pervades everyday life and say Nigeria has never had it so bad. Nigerians are right to be angry. They are right to raise their voices against the government. This, however, is a time that calls for sober reflection and analysis. It is simply not enough to say that Buhari's policies are not working. The more important question that needs to be asked is: Why, despite President Buhari's best efforts and his apparent desire to see Nigeria take her place in the comity of nations as a prosperous and self-confident country, the reverse has been the case? It needs to be pointed out that President Buhari began well policy-speaking in May 2015.

The national economy that President Buhari inherited in May 2015 was in profound crisis. Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a former World Bank economist and President Goodluck Jonathan's Finance Minister was an expert in massaging the country's economic statistics to look good on paper. Nigeria under Goodluck Jonathan, she claimed, had become the largest economy in Africa. Economic growth had averaged eight percent and millions of jobs were being created in all sectors of the economy. Okonjo-Iweala believed firmly in the IMF and World Bank's neoliberal economic policies and she had sought to apply them fully in Nigeria: removal of subsidies on petrol and other vital necessities; privatization of public enterprises; and opening up the economy to all manner of imports in the name of "free" trade. Goodluck Jonathan is not an economist nor did he have any Ph.D development economists in his cabinet to serve as a counterweight to Okonjo-Iweala. She was given free rein with the high-sounding name of Coordinating Minister of the Economy.

However, the economic fundamentals that President Buhari and his team encountered when they assumed office in May 2015 told a more distressing story than was painted by Ngozi okonjo-Iweala. Local manufacturing was at an all-time low, averaging a miserly four percent of GDP; agriculture was gasping for breath despite the colourful speeches of Goodluck Jonathan's Minister of Agriculture, Dr Akinwumi Adesina; and millions of Nigerians, particularly young university and polytechnic graduates were trudging the streets looking for non-existent jobs. The Naira was exchanging at a dollar rate manufacturers could not afford and everywhere one looked it was a bleak picture for the national economy.

To tackle this crisis, the Buhari government unfurled the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) in 2017 and promised to create 15 million jobs by 2020. Not done, the government introduced the Social Investment Programme (SIP), targeted at the poor and vulnerable, particularly petty traders, artisans, and rural dwellers. When the Brookings Institution, an American policy think tank announced in 2019 that Nigeria had replaced India as the 'poverty capital of the world,' the Buhari government countered this by stating its

intention to pull 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years by means of its 'tried and tested' economic policies. However, by the end of 2020 when the dollar began to exchange for nearly 500 Naira, it had become obvious to discerning Nigerians that the Buhari government was long on rhetoric but painfully short in meaningful economic policies that would address the pains of ordinary Nigerians (Ike Okonta, 2020).

President Buhari has compounded the nation's economic problems by pursuing economic policies which have triggered inflation in addition to the already existing stagnation. Stagflation is a deadly disease. Bowing to pressure from the IMF and the World Bank, Buhari's advisers further devalued the Naira and jacked up the cost of petrol and electricity. When ordinary people are complaining that the cost of living is too high, what a responsible and caring government should do is work out ways in which costs can be lowered and the Naira made to purchase more. The Buhari government did not follow this course. The result is the run-away inflation which Nigerians are now complaining loudly about. It is now clear that President Buhari's economic policies are wrong-headed and are not likely to work in the two short years left of the administration. Let us now look at Buhari's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan policy.

President Buhari's economic policies failed because the government did not focus on fundamentals. The one sure way to pull the country out of the present economic doldrums is to quickly industrialize the national economy just as China and the other East Asian economic tigers did in the 1970s and 1980s. To industrialize, you need to build a steel industry to serve as basic raw material input for manufacturing.

Second, you need to tackle the perennial problem of electric power shortage and make it available and affordable. Steel and electricity are the cornerstone of the Asian Tigers' economic miracle. President Buhari's administration has absolutely no steel policy. Ajaokuta, after the dawdling and incoherence of the Olusegun Obasanjo government has been left to rot by the Buhari government. Regarding electricity, the country was generating 4000 megawatts following the partial privatization of the industry by the Jonathan government in 2013. Six years into the Buhari administration, the country is still generating 4000 megawatts. To put this in context, 4000 megawatts is what an average-sized American city generates. For a Nigeria of 200 million people, it is not even enough to power household needs, not to talk of powering the country's industrial revolution.

Conclusions

It is obvious from our observations above that Buhari's administration has continued to make the same mistake of the SAP economic policies. SAP programmes brought untold hardship to the people which include; Subsidy removal, commercialization and privatization of services, retrenchment, deregulation of the economy, free trade, devaluation of currency. These policies and programmes alienated the poor from the economy. Fees were increased but there was no wage increase. Everything was subjected to market forces except wages. The scenario is not far from the same today. The money policies of Buhari's administration have made nonsense of any poverty alleviation programmes. The incessant increases of the petroleum pump price, increase in electricity tariff, and the devaluation of naira among others have demeaned the purchasing power of the poor. It became clear that Buhari has compounded the nation's economic problems by pursuing economic policies which have triggered inflation in addition to the already existing stagnation thereby engendering poverty in the land. Non

proper articulation and implementations of EGRP has made the realization of its targets impossible.

Recommendations

 The federal government should adopt policies that would improve income distribution through agrarian-focused and employment-intensive growth strategies; industrialization through a sustained government funding and support; high and widely spread expenditure on education (research and development inclusive); redistribution of assets; a structured market to direct education, training, and asset accumulation towards deprived groups; and strong policies towards social protection and social income. This is far better than going into the market to share ten thousand Naira each to market women as this would not yield any significant increase in the income generation capacity of the micro business owners.

 The federal government should adopt a system of governance that is inclusive so that they harnessed the potentials they are endowed with. These mean embracing democratic governance that is accountable and inclusive in nature and practice, as this will lead to a proper functioning of the institutions of governance and bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth and income.

 Government and all the relevant agencies should provide ways of making credit available to the citizenry and also pursue policies of financial inclusion to accommodate the poor and the vulnerable either through deposit money banks or special development banks to reduce inequality in the country.

References

Aigbokhan, Ben. E. (2000). "Poverty, Growth and Inequality in Nigeria: A case Study" AERC Research Paper 102, African Economic Research Consortium, Nairobi, Kenya.

Aigbokhan, B. E. (2008). Growth, inequality and poverty in Nigeria. *Prepared for United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*.

Aja, A.A. (2013) *Theory and Practice of Marxism.* Abakiliki: Altitude Printers.

Anyanwu, J. C. (1992). President Babangida's structural adjustment programme and inflation in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Development in Africa, 7*, (24) 1-5.

Arisi-Nwugballa, E. A., Elom, M. E., & Onyeizugbe, C. U. (2016). Evaluating the relevance of Entrepreneurial Orientation to the Performance of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences, 6*(3) 45-57

Canagarajah,S., Ngwafon and S. Thomas. (1997). "The Evolution of Poverty and Welfare in Nigeria, Policy Research Working Paper, WPS 1715. The World Bank, Washington D.C.

Cunningham, W**. (*2007*).** Minimum wages and social policy: lessons from developing countries. directions in development; human development. *Open knowledge, world bank* 6 (8) 12-23

Dauda, R. S. (2017). Poverty and economic growth in Nigeria: Issues and Policies. *Journal of Poverty, 21*(1), 61-79.

Dike, V. E. (2010). Review of the challenges facing the Nigerian economy: Is national development possible without technological capability? *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12(5), 95-112.

Faruqee, R. (1994). "Nigeria; Ownership Abandoned". In I. Husain and R. Faruqee, eds., Adjustment in Africa; Lessons from Country Case Study. The World Bank, Washington D.C.

Gafaar, Oluwatoyin Alade S; Osinubi, Tokunbo Simbowale (2005) : Macroeconomic Policies and Pro-Poor Growth in Nigeria, Proceedings of the German Development Economics Conference, Kiel 2005, No. 24, Verein für Socialpolitik, Ausschuss für Entwicklungsländer Hannover

Ihonvbere, J. O. (1993). Economic crisis, structural adjustment and social crisis in Nigeria. *World Development, 21*(1), 141-153.

Kincaid, J. (1973). *Poverty and equality in Britain*, Penguin Books

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1848). *Manifesto of the Communist Party:* https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communistmanifesto/ch01.htm#a3

Muntember, D., (1989). The Impact of IMF – World Bank Progrmmes on Women and Children in Zambia" in B. Onimode (ed.), *The IMF, The World Bank and African Debt: The Economic Impact*, Vol. 1, London: Zed Books, 1989.

Obadan, M.I, (1994). An Econometric Analysis of the Impact of Structural Adjustment Programme on the Nigerian Natural Rubber Supply. NCEMA Monograph Series No. 4. Ibadan; National Centre for Economic Management and Administration.

Ogbulu, M. A., (2009). Capital market development and economic growth: application of co-integration and causality tests, *Journal of Finance, Banking and Investment, Abia State University, Uturu Nigeria.*

Ogwumike, F.O., (1987). Poverty and Basic Needs Approach to Development in Nigeria. An unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Department of Economics, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Ohiorhenan, J. F. E.,(1989). *Capital and the State in Nigeria*. New York: Greenwood Press,

Omoyibo, K. U. (2013). *Leadership, governance, and poverty in Nigeria* (Vol. 4).

Oshewolo, S. (2010). Galloping poverty in Nigeria: an appraisal of government interventionist policies. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, 12*(6), 264-274.

Osinubi, T. S. (2005). Macroeconomic analysis of growth, unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. *Pakistan Economic and Social Review*. 13 (2) 67-84

Townsend, P. (1979). *Poverty in the United Kingdom : A Survey of household resources and standards of living*, Penguin Books, 1979.

Yusuf, B. (1986). *Structural Adjustment and The Political Questions" in Review of African Political Economy*, No. 37, December, 1986.

Walker, L. & Heather J. S. (2001). *Relative deprivation: specification, development, and integration*, Cambridge University Press.

Yusuf, B. (1986). *Structural Adjustment and The Political Questions" in Review of African Political Economy*, No. 37, December, 1986.