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## Poverty and Social Injustice: A Review of the Relationship Between Poverty and Insecurity In Nigeria.

Grace Umezurike

Department of Philosophy and Religion, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki  
Email: [graceumez@yahoo.com](mailto:graceumez@yahoo.com), Tel: +2347033571612

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of poverty is explicated by UN as those for whom 'a minimum, nutritionally adequate diet plus essential non-food requirements are not affordable'. This definition is not all encompassing as many aspects of what constitutes a poor state is excluded. For instance, some scholars argued that social exclusion, in the form of being discriminated against, despised or disrespected, should be made part of the definition of poverty because poverty is not just about having less in quantitative terms, but also involves a qualitative difference, such as fear of the future, shame, etc. The task of this paper therefore is to review the different opinions of several scholars concerning the concept of Poverty and relate it to how it encourages or discourages insecurity in a nation (Nigeria in Perspective). The paper will conceive poverty in two ways. Poverty used to describe a state of affairs in an absolute sense or to describe a state of affairs relative to another. When one is described as poor in the absolute sense, one is said to be living at or below the level of subsistence. The emphasis here is on biophysical survival: if one is poor, one's needs that make living possible are not met. This two positions will be reviewed and its effects in relation to insecurity in Nigeria considered. It is the opinion of this paper that Nigeria's problem of insecurity is majorly caused by absolute poverty in some regions (Northern Nigeria) and relative poverty in the southern Nigeria. The paper posits that social justice can only be achieved and insecurity destroyed if a total re-orientation of the citizens towards wealth is achieved through constant formal and informal education and the government breaches the gap between the rich and the poor by providing amenities for the populace.

**Keywords:** Poverty, Social Injustice, Insecurity, Nigeria

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### INTRODUCTION

By raising the question of the 'implications of poverty', we are asking in what way or ways it is bad for a person to be in poverty. Obviously, this will depend on the theory of poverty in question: according to standard theories a person would not be able to meet their basic needs, or would be excluded from taking a normal place in society. Taking Rawls's view as an example, one of the primary goods is the 'social bases of self-respect' [1]. Those in poverty may be less likely than others to be able to access the resources and achievements that facilitate self-respect, which for Rawls means being secure in one's own conception of the good and the pursuit thereof. People in poverty may be less secure in their conception of the good and the pursuit of it. One reason might be that the conceptions of the good valued by a society might be those that people living in poverty cannot achieve, such as owning one's own property, going on holiday, eating a certain type of food and so on. Hence one can see the concern with the distribution of the social bases of self-respect as also a concern with relative poverty.

Rawls's last book on distributive justice, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement (2001), has a section entitled 'Who Are The Least Advantaged?' Here Rawls explains a modification in his account of primary goods that he had started to develop within a few years of the first publication of A Theory of Justice in 1971. In addition to being 'all-purpose means' to pursue individuals' conceptions, of the good, the primary goods are now also conceived as the means to 'develop and fully exercise the two moral powers' (Rawls,

2001, p. 57). Primary goods are conceived of as 'citizen's needs'. Those in poverty would have more difficulty than others in acting as citizens, helping others and taking part in the political process, for example.

This article acknowledges the link between poverty, unemployment and social injustice and Insecurity. The discussion, furthermore, draws strongly on the theory of structural poverty. Within the framework of this theory, it is postulated that poverty is caused by unequal distribution of, and/or lack of access to, material and non-material resources. The first refers to basic needs, while the second refers to access to opportunities. For the purpose of this article the authors, therefore, worked from the premise that social injustice arises when access to material and non-material resources is not equally distributed and that this lack of access hampers development and therefore sustains poverty [2]; [3]. The theory of structural poverty is furthermore based on the belief that the vulnerability of people is the result of a lack of assets, resources and opportunities, on the one hand. On the other hand, the theory is based on the conviction that such vulnerability is caused by people's inability to react effectively to social problems. This would imply that the way people deal with a lack of assets, resources and opportunities will determine how poverty will be addressed [4]. In this regard [5] asserts that the reduction of poverty depends on the creation of viable social networks and trustful relationships between individuals, groups and communities. It implies that a community that suffers from poverty-related issues is a mirror image of the social interactions and processes of that very same community.

Social processes refer to two dynamics, namely opposition and/or cooperation. On the one hand, opposition is associated with competition and conflict that direct the social interactions. Cooperation, on the other hand, refers to accommodation, assimilation and acculturation that support the development of interactions conducive to social harmony [6]. The degree to which government and the state, the business sector and civil society (including the church) become involved and collaborate therefore impacts on the way in which poverty is dealt with [7]. According to this viewpoint, partnerships between the mentioned role-players, including people affected by poverty, will lead to a fair distribution of resources, knowledge, skills and responsibilities.

This paper identified the main cause of insecurity in Nigeria to be poverty. Undoubtedly, mass poverty is synonymous with failure in national security. Hence in the 2013 lecture organized by the Centre for Peace, Conflict and Security Studies, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, the Speaker, House of Representative, Aminu Tambuwal stated with great emphasis that 'corruption and poverty are the greatest threat to national security and development in Nigeria'. Poverty triggers violence leading to national insecurity.

Not only identifying the major cause of insecurity in Nigeria, the paper exposed the relationship between poverty and national insecurity, identified the degree of harm warranted by insecurity in Nigeria, studied the corresponding effects of insecurity and the harm it has caused Nigeria, looked at the effort Nigerian Government has made towards averting insurgency and determining why it has yielded no fruits, recommend possible measures to control poverty, crime and insecurity in Nigeria in order to reposition Nigeria as the giant of Africa.

#### **Poverty and Security; a conceptual framework.**

Poverty can simply be defined as a lack, deficiency of a necessity. It is a condition or quality of being in need, having little or inadequate supply of the necessities of life. Poverty hurts and can be very degrading. It is capable of driving one into desperation and denying one the capacity of right reasoning and good use of conscience. When poverty denies one this quintessence of humanness; that is, right reasoning; the individual acts wild to the level of lower animals thereby endangering the human society leading to all forms of crimes; stealing, robbery, kidnapping, trafficking, cyber crime, terrorism, thuggery, e.t.c.

According to [8], poverty can be defined as deprivation and this form of deprivation is manifest in two folds: physiological and social deprivation<sup>i</sup>. Physiological deprivation is the inability of individuals to achieve basic material needs such as limited access to food, education, health care services, housing, water, sanitation services, environmental needs, et.c. The privation here can either be that these basic needs are unavailable or that their availability does not meet the required demand. In the same vein, social deprivation means a limited access or absence of relational materials or the privation on the capacity for social relationship.

The 2001 World bank report while bemoaning the level of poverty in the world described poverty as the lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities of life. [9] described the basic necessities as following;

food, shelter, clothing, acceptable levels of health services, education, good and accessible roads, challenges such as rudeness, humiliation, shame, inhuman treatment and exploitation in the hands of the people in authority; absence of rule of law, lack of protection against violence e.t.c. [10]

According to [11], poverty can be about an individual or shared experience of a particular group in the society. When it depicts a situation of lack and deprivation of some groups in the society, it shows a common experience of the group warranted by some factors common to the group in their environment. As socio-economic and political phenomena, it deprives this group of access to the basic necessities that limit the group and makes them incapacitated.

According to [12], poverty can be of six different degrees<sup>ii</sup>:

1. Situational
2. Generational
3. Absolute
4. Relative
5. Urban
6. Rural

Situational poverty is a temporary form of poverty or loss occurring at a particular time warranted by factors such as environmental disaster, divorce, health challenges, e.t.c. Generational poverty involves the birth of two generations into poverty such that the later has no background to over grow poverty as inherited. Absolute poverty implies total absence or lack of the basic necessities like shelter, food, water, e.t.c. Relative poverty is a comparable form of poverty. This is the form of poverty in consideration of the average standard of living in ones society. Urban poverty is the form experienced amongst people in the metropolitan. It is a unique form of poverty that is warranted by the environment such as overcrowding, violence, noise, industrial actions, e.t.c. Rural poverty is a direct opposite of urban poverty. It is a non metropolitan settlement with less population which limits attention towards the procurement of services such as good hospitals, roads, welfare, e.t.c.

In the same vein, poverty leads to classism in the society. This draws a great barrier between the have (higher/first class citizens) and have not (lower class citizens) in the society. This dichotomy sometimes makes the higher class to lord it over the lower class of the have not. Unfortunate is that the lower class does more menial jobs or odd jobs which are more laborious whereas they receive peanuts as wages while the first class citizens use the lower class as means or tools to their wealth. They use the lower class even against their wish and sometimes as instrument of social unrest in the society. Most unsettling is that the higher class intimidates the lower class and trample on their basic rights with no one to speak for them while their only offence is just that they are poor. Also, very unpleasant is that the higher class uses the lower to cause social unrest such as kidnapping, election thuggery, assassination, human assault, terrorism, e.t.c.

In the same, another concept in the study is 'security'. The word security originated from the Latin word, 'securus' where 'se' means without while 'curus' means uneasiness. Hence security simply means liberation from uneasiness or a peaceful situation without any risks or threats. It can also be said to mean 'to feel safe' or to be protected. Security can be said to be the assurance of low probability of damage to acquired values. Thus security can be summarized as following;

1. Protection from physical harm
2. Protection against robbery attack
3. Protection from possibility of future financial difficulty
4. Freedom from vulnerability to political or military takeover of the government.

According to [13], security means a stable or relatively unchanged atmosphere in which individuals or groups may pursue their ends without fear of loss or injury. Security can be said to be the mode in which most other values such as wealth, well-being, affection, are enjoyed with the expectation that they will last for at least some time. Undoubtedly, security is indispensable and crucial without which crisis, chaos and disharmony will eat up both the government and the citizens. Simply put, security can be said to be a lack of threat in a system.

Similarly, National security is the protection and assurance of safety in a state and not being exposed to danger. This assurance of safety includes the citizens, economy, institutions, values, e.t.c. Hence it is the concern of the government towards the stability and safety of a state and the government relies on a range of measures including political, economic, military powers and diplomacy to enforce national security. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 14(2)(b) provides that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. In the fulfilment of this mandate, different governments come up with National Security Policies which are guides towards fulfilling the constitutional obligation of security and welfare to the people.

The purpose of national security is to uphold critical national values especially values related to survival, self preservation and collective advancement. Hence the national security policy of Nigeria since 1960 has been particularly tied to the issues of dealing with problems related to external aggression and addressing internal upheavals. To avoid unnecessary external aggression, section 37 of the Terrorism (prevention) Act of 2011 mandated the Nigerian Immigration Services to prevent persons reasonably suspected of terrorism from entering into Nigeria.

### **Nigerian experience of Poverty and the Threat to National Security.**

Poverty has been identified as the major threat to national security in Nigeria. Unfortunately, poverty exposes the state and individuals to danger in form of increased criminal behavior, deprivation or denial [14]. It is good to note that Nigeria has one of the world's highest economic growth rate with an average of 7.4%. Nevertheless, it is heartbreaking to note that poverty still remains very significant at 33.1% in African biggest economy.

Following the United Nations Development Programme (UNDEP) report, anybody living on less than US \$ 1 is living below the poverty line and is suffering from deprivation. Woefully, in Nigeria as in most less developed countries; the position is not one of low poverty but of mass poverty. Following UNDP report of 2008, the percentage of Nigerians living below the poverty line was about 70%, and this percentage keeps increasing annually thereby widening the poverty gap.

Regrettably, this group of Nigerians is the most exploited economically and manipulated politically. They are regionally disadvantaged and almost unrecognized. This lower class of Nigerians are characteristically lacking in basic amenities such as education, good road, health services, water, e.t.c. Most of these very poor Nigerians reside in rural areas, engaging in farming and having a large household to carter for while the house head is unemployed nor has he the hope of any meaningful living.

It is hearbreaking that Nigeria's rank in the Human Development Index rated in the year 2000 was as low as 0.452 while Nigeria took the 148<sup>th</sup> position out of 174 countries.

Earlier this time in 1999, the United Nations report stated that Nigeria's Human Poverty Index (HPI) was only about 41.6% making the country the 25<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world.

#### Estimated Total Population and Rate of Poverty in Nigeria (1980-2002)

Year/Population (in million)	(in Estimated total of Poor People (in million)	Absolute no. that are poor	Percentage
1980	64.6	18.1	28.1
1981	66.7	21.3	32.5
1982	68.4	24.2	35.5
1983	70.6	27.5	39.0
1984	73.0	31.4	43.0
1985	75.4	34.9	46.3
1986	77.9	35.8	46.0
1987	80.4	36.5	45.4
1988	83.1	37.4	45.0
1989	84.9	37.7	44.5
1990	86.6	38.0	44.0
1991	88.5	38.5	43.5
1992	91.3	39.0	42.7
1993	93.5	45.8	49.0
1994	96.2	52.6	54.7
1995	98.9	59.3	60.0
1996	102.3	67.1	65.6
1997	104.0	67.6	65.5
1998	106.3	68.0	69.5
1999	109.3	72.3	72.0
2000	111.3	77.0	74.0
2001	114.0	81.2	83.1
2002	116.4	86.0	88.0

This condition of poverty is typically responsible for the high rate of crime in Nigeria today such as stealing, robbery, election rigging, kidnapping, trafficking, etc. These vices are motivated by poverty. When the individuals who perpetrate these actions look for means of survival and life becomes so unbearable such that they are so frustrated, they seek indecent means of survival.

A visit to Nigerian Prisons, Abakaliki branch on September 22, 2018 showed that the majority of the inmates are from the lower class citizens of the state who are typically poor with little or no means of survival. From the interview with these prisoners, their crimes include: party related matters, elections fraud, kidnapping, robbery, cultism, burglary activities, assault, stealing, etc. One of the inmates was offered N50,000 to kidnap someone. His story began when the mother fail ill and the hospital billed N50,000 for the medication. On his request for help to a well known politician, he was given a condition to be part of a kidnapping squad so as to be paid N50,000 and unfortunately, it was a failed deal.

Furthermore, street hawking is another big challenge to our country Nigeria. Many young men and women are out there in the street hawking and as beggars because they are not meaningfully employed. This is because unemployment has been a fundamental cause of poverty in Nigeria and the youth are suffering the brunt of this ill-fate. For the fact that the system does not take care of these youths, they are only good as political thugs in the hands of the politicians or Boko-Haram and kidnapping agents in the hands of insurgent masters. A general survey shows that these youths used in these nefarious activities are very unwilling to engage in these activities but for their economic conditions. Interview with kidnapping victims reported that some kidnappers requested for forgiveness and prayers from their victims even while they demanded for ransom. According to them, they engage in such activities either to pay their school fees, house rent, hospital bill, other bills which overpowered their meager financial strength. Further interview with some girls (harlots) at *Spera in Deo* junction reported that harloting is a very uninteresting business but they cannot do otherwise minding their basic financial needs such as taking care of their families, house rent or school fees, etc.

### **Combating Poverty towards National Security in Nigeria.**

Having identified poverty to be the major threat to security in Nigeria, this paper exposed the different dimensions this ugly situation manifests itself. Hence it is the interest of the paper to proffer solutions on how best to come out of this mess in order to rescue our jinxed country Nigeria. The paper made a thorough survey of Government and Non-Governmental Organizations' efforts towards arresting the challenge of poverty in the country and to what extent these attempts satisfied the purported intention of salvaging our country from poverty.

Over the years, Nigerian government, World Bank, United Nation, Non-governmental Organizations and individuals embarked on some policies to alleviate or eradicate poverty in the country. These policies and interventions were some micro and macro attempts on unit household and national economic policies respectively towards offering palliatives to the challenges of poverty in our country Nigeria.

These attempts were done with full expectations of raising the standard of living in Nigeria. Hence all bodies in this attempt supposedly had one intention to align with the government mandate as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 14(2)(b) that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. It is in fulfilment of this mandate that the government struggles with other Non-Governmental Organizations to provide freedom, justices, welfare, equity and egalitarian society.

It is worthy of note that attempts on poverty alleviation has been of great concern even during the colonial rule. Hence in 1956, the colonial government inaugurated a ten-year development welfare plan towards the welfare of the masses. This programme was not abandoned but gained new phase at independence such that government plans and programmes early years after the independence were obvious facts towards enhancing the living standard of the populace. Poverty alleviation programmes of this period centered on education as an indispensable factor and key to drive economic, agricultural, technological and intellectual development of the nation.

The initiative of 1972 by General Yakubu Gowon's National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank had great plans to be extra ordinarily devoted to funding agricultural programmes but the whole programme turned to be abortive<sup>iii</sup>. This was immediately followed by the popular Operation Feed the Nation by the then military head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1976. This was meant to be an avenue to support and train village farmers on the best farming practices for improved production but the effort went the part of his predecessors. The successor, Shehu Shagari's Green Revolution Programme had the objective of mechanized farming that would overtake importation of food thereby making local food available and affordable.

In the regime of Buhari, the Go Back to Land Programme was the most popular programme to combat poverty but the programme failed while paying greater attention to his fight against indiscipline and corruption which was never successful. This was followed by Gerneal Ibrahim Babangida's Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). The directorate provided basic infrastructural facilities for increased agricultural output, encouraging co-operative societies, e.t.c [15]. Also, in 1989 this effort was complimented with the establishment of People's Bank and community banks to enable farmers access loans to escape the bottle neck involved in commercial bank transactions.

Similarly, this same period was the establishment of the Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA). The Authority was intended to power commercial agriculture by empowering farmers with inputs and fund. Minding the rate of unemployment in the country, Babangida's regime flagged the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1987. This was in attempt to combat the prevalent unemployment of youth. In tandem with its mandate, the directorate in the same year it began created about 150,000 job opportunities and corresponding policies to develop work programmes. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) had four targets as following:

1. Vocational and skill acquisition training
2. Entrepreneurship and business training
3. Training for Rural employment
4. Training for Labour-based works programme.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is the only surviving program till date. It has continued its mandate of facilitating employment for the youth at all levels; school levers, graduates, vocational skills, e.t.c. Nevertheless, the greatest challenge it suffered was non-compliance and non-follow up programmes for the beneficiaries. The National Directorate of Employment claimed that out of the N526,901,000 disbursed to beneficiaries they recovered only about N129,048,757 which is about 24% of the capital.

The later 1990s was the introduction of the family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). Its mandate was to support co-operative societies with soft loans. The programme targeted assistance in poultry production, soap making, animal husbandry, garri processing and other related matters. It was an empowerment scheme that empowered about 21,000 co-operative societies across the nation between 1998-2000, with about N3.3 billion.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the National Poverty Eradication Programme was introduced. This programme was established in 2000 as a replacement of Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). The mandate of the National Poverty Eradication Programme was to eradicate poverty through a coordinated implementation and monitoring. Their mandate can be articulated in four points as follows:

1. Youth Employment schemes
2. Rural Infrastructure Development schemes
3. Social welfare services
4. National resources development and conservation schemes<sup>iv</sup>.

It is obvious from the analysis so far that the government has been deeply involved in anti-poverty polices and schemes. In spite of these attempts, the level of poverty is still alarming and highly entrenched such that the socioeconomic indicators are pointing downwards marked by unemployment, malnourishment, social unrest, etc. Therefore, it is quite clear that these programmes are yet to achieve the desired end. Very many factors have militated against the success of the said programmes among which include the following;

1. Poor policy formulation and implementation.
2. Corruption manifest in embezzlement of public fund
3. Policy discontinuity
4. Duplication of roles among ministries and inefficiency in implementation

5. Unhealthy competitions
6. Bureaucratic hurdles
7. Lack of proper supervision.
8. Improper definition of the poor for whom the programme is targeted and the choice of the wrong people.
9. Lack of confidence on the government
10. Lack of proper man power and personnel to anchor the programmes.

Hence the government is encouraged to sit back once more to assess the prevalent serial failure of these programmes and address the afore mentioned causes why these programmes failed. The government should be sincere enough in the activities while employing the right people to manage these schemes for efficiency and sustainability. The government should also avoid selfish interests and apply these schemes to the really poor persons and regions.

### CONCLUSION

The Brookings Institution, an American think-tank research group published 2018 data from World Poverty Clock showing Nigeria with the population of about 200million people as the poverty 'capital of the world'. It reported that over 87million people already live below the poverty line of US \$ 1 a day<sup>v</sup>. This is alarming and unwelcoming such that there is great need to upturn this record least the corresponding effect of this condition eats up our country Nigeria.

For a nation so well-endowed with human and material resources as ours, the current levels of general poverty and unemployment especially among the youths, represent the most serious condemnation of our past policies and strategies. It is obvious that very many forms of poverty alleviation programmes have been introduced to arrest the challenge of poverty in Nigeria. Unfortunately, they suffered the same fate of failure in achieving their mandates following some reasons as earlier stated such as poor management, embezzlement, non implementation of policies, political interest, etc.

Most disheartening is the inescapable effect of poverty in Nigeria. Unquestionably, the research makes it obvious that poverty triggers violence leading to national insecurity<sup>vi</sup>. This degree of poverty has a portentous result of threat to national security. The research exposed the devastating effect of threat imposed in the nation experienced both by the higher class and lower class of Nigerian society. It is disquieting that this condition has made the youth give in to anti-social activities such as stealing, robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, cyber crime, assaults, elections rigging and other election related matters, etc. Like cause and effect principle, it is very obvious that these vices may be difficult to curb if the prevalent alarming degree of poverty is not arrested.

In view of the escalating nature of poverty and its effect on national security, there is great need for government to restructure and redesign approaches that will permanently reduce poverty through provision of basic infrastructures, efficient and affordable services. In the same vein, this paper is a clarion call on all Nigeria citizens especially the youth. In spite of the degree of poverty experienced in Nigeria, the youth should engage themselves in meaningful entrepreneurship in order to make a good living. There is urgent need to return to agriculture for self sustenance and commercial purposes. Anti-social activities can never be a source of alleviating poverty rather it imposes greater difficulty on the nation and endangers the lives of both Nigerians and the offender. The youth should remember that poverty though the cause of threat to security but poverty does not excuse responsibility for anti-social vices.

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