

ALARMING RATE OF CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Abiodun, Temitope Francis (Ph.D), Onafowora, Oluwasolape (Ph.D),
Ayo-Adeyekun, Ifeoluwa (M.Sc)

¹Institute for Peace & Strategic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

²Department of Political Science, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria.

³Postgraduate Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Abstract: *The northern Nigeria has a higher child-poverty rate than other regions in the country, with devastating effects. Children grow up in impoverished households—a particular concern for children in the North, whose poverty rate is triple that of the children in the Southern part. It has profound effects, in terms of health, educational achievement, earnings, and even mortality. However, high rate of poverty, poor leadership, high level of corruption in Nigeria constitute the various factors for high rate of child poverty in the region. This study interrogates the threats posed by the menace to national security; examines the factors giving room for child poverty in northern Nigeria; it assesses the efforts of the Nigerian government in combating the menace. The study concludes that, the failing economy, high rate of poverty, failure of government and corruption inhibit the efforts at putting the menace under control.*

Keywords: Child Poverty, National Security, Economic Development, Poverty Eradication.

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the various supports regularly received from Western nations, United Nations and other international organizations and donors, the continent of Africa has been experiencing a resurgence of factors that put increasing numbers of children at risk of falling into extreme poverty. This resurgence is mainly due to the impact of the economic crises in the country. As a result of these crises, income equalities and wealth gaps continue to widen to the point that even children in high-income countries are at risk of falling into poverty. In 2011, the European Union (EU) deemed children to be the most vulnerable group in the continent, as 27 percent of children were designated as at risk of falling into poverty and experiencing social marginalization. According to UNICEF, approximately thirty (30) million children across 35 countries with developed economies lived in poverty in 2012 (UNICEF, 2012).

The scourge of child poverty has also taken a seat in Nigeria, a country that is tagged to be the “Giant” amongst the states in Africa. The menace in Nigeria, most especially in the northern region of the country, has become a noted phenomenon and has affected and claimed several children’s lives. Children have been underperforming and often falling asleep in school due to inadequate nutrition at home prompting the establishment of “Almajiri Schools” (Islamic schools for the less-privileged children), school meal programmes in some Northern states in Nigeria, like Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Gombe, Taraba, Sokoto and Borno States (Alimeka, 2001). Frequently children in those states are forced to beg on the streets or carry out menial jobs or works in order to help or sustain their families. In the Northern part of the country, children are often left to fend for themselves as their parents move to various other locations to find work. This abandonment leaves children frightened and at risk. Poverty in Nigeria remains significant despite high economic growth, it first started sometime during the British Empire. Nigeria has one of the world’s highest economic growth rates (averaging 7.4% over the last decade), a well-developed economy, and plenty of natural resources such as oil. However, it retains a high level of poverty, with 63% of its population living on below \$1 daily, implying a decline in equity (Wikipedia, 2012).

Nigeria currently has a total population of over 198, 213 million – the largest in Africa and a fast growing economy (www.worldometer.com). Agriculture, before oil discovery, was the mainstay of the economy, contributing about 45 percent of GDP while has now been solely depended upon. Yet it is a food-deficit nation and imports large amount of grains, livestock products and fish. Despite Nigeria's plentiful agricultural resources and oil wealth, poverty is widespread in the country and has increased since the late 1990s. Over 70 percent of Nigerians are now classified as poor, and 35 percent of them live in absolute poverty (Wikipedia, 2007). In the last few decades, poverty has become pervasive in Nigeria; the country has slipped from a buoyant and up-coming economy to rank, according to the British Department for International Development, among the poorest 20 nations in the world. It is quite unfortunate that a country recognized as one of the richest in human and material resources in Africa and indeed the global world, currently finds itself in this rather inglorious situation. From 1970s Nigeria has ranked as the sixth largest producer of crude oil. The country has earned billions of dollars from the export of the product (Edoh, 2003). Nigerians and the rest of the world hoped that with such enormous resources it would be possible for the country to "advance to the next level" and achieve rapid economic and industrial transformations in all ramifications; but all is to no avail. As a result of an array of mismanagement, incompetent or poor leadership and high rate of corruption on the part of public officials, Nigeria's fortune is siphoned (Edoh, 2003).

Despite the fact that poverty is characterized with some similarities locally and internationally, there existed different yardsticks for measurements. Globally, the conglomerations of major African states are rated as most devastated while parts of Asia and North American nations follow same trend. Locally, Northern Nigeria is characterized as more wretched, abandoned and ravaged compared to other parts of the country (Auwal, 2012). The English word "poverty" came from the Latin word pauper "poor", via Anglo-Norman poverty. There are several definitions of poverty depending on the context of the situation it is placed in and views of the person giving the definition (Wikipedia, 2012). According to free Encyclopaedia: poverty is a state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. Absolute poverty or destitution refers to the one who lacks basic human needs, which commonly includes clean and fresh water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing and shelter. About 1.7 billion people are estimated to live in absolute poverty today. Relative poverty refers to lacking a usual or socially acceptable level of resources or income as compared with others within a society or a country (Wikipedia, 2012).

The United Nations defines poverty as a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed or cloth a family, not having a school or clinic to go, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation (United Nations, 2011). Poverty is a state of deprivation or denial of the basic choices and opportunities needed to enjoy a decent steward of living; to live a long, healthy constructive life and to participate in cultural life of the community" (Kankwenda, 2002) The illustration above bears a striking balance with the features of poverty as a phenomenon by the World Bank and the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995. According to World Bank; Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better ones life (World Bank, 2012).

II. CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty refers to the state of children living in penury or abject poverty. This applies to children that come from poor families or orphans being raised with limited, or in some cases absent, state resources (Butty, 2012). Children that fail to meet the minimum acceptable standard of the nation where that child lives are said to be poor. In developing countries, these standards are lower and when combined with the increased number of orphans the effects are more extreme (Butty, 2012). The definition of children in most countries is 'people under the age of eighteen', while biologically the transition from childhood to adulthood is said to occur with the onset of puberty. Culturally defining the end of childhood is more complex, and takes into account factors such as the commencement of work, end of schooling and marriage as well as class, gender and race (Carson, 2012). According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) "children living in poverty are those who experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to stay alive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential, and participate as full and equal members of society" (UNICEF, 2012). The Child Fund International (CFI) definition is based on Deprivation (lack of materialistic conditions and services), Exclusion (denial of rights and safety) and Vulnerability (when society cannot deal with threats to children). Other charitable organizations also use this multi-dimensional approach to child poverty, defining it as a combination of economic, social, cultural, physical, environmental

and emotional factors. These definitions suggest child poverty is multidimensional, relative to their current and changing living conditions and complex interactions of the body, mind and emotions are involved (UNICEF, 2012).

III. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

The following provide operationalization of some concepts as used in the research:

Child poverty: refers to the phenomenon of children living in penury or abject poverty. This applies to children that come from poor families or orphans being raised with limited, or in some cases absent, state resources. Children that fail to meet the minimum acceptable standard of life for the nation where that child lives are said to be poor.

Economic development: is the process by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. Economic development includes the process and policies by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people.

National security: National security is known to be the preservation of state's independence, peoples' institutions, and identity, including the advancement of her integrity and interests within and outside through military, economic, ideological, diplomatic, and socio-cultural instrumentalities.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is predicated within the confines of using Family Stress Model and Investment Model.

Two theoretical perspectives that have been extensively deployed to explain this mechanism are the family stress model and the investment model (Conger R. D., Conger K. J., Martin M. J. 2010). Both theories posit an indirect effect of poverty on childhood conduct problems. Boss (2017) defined family stress as "a disturbance in the study state of the family system." Such a disturbance may be due to external factors such as, unemployment or internal factors such as, divorce. Others (McCubbin, 1980) have conceptualized family stress as the response of a family to distressing life events and tensions generated by these events. According to the family stress model, economic deprivation induces psychological distresses such as, depression, anxiety, and parental stress, due to the strain of having fewer resources available for day-to-day living. Such stressors are associated with frustration and aggressive interactions (Berkowitz, 1989) which in turn lead parents to adopt punitive or unresponsive parenting styles with consequences for childhood conduct trajectories (Conger et al., 2010). Support for this model comes from studies demonstrating a link between poverty, parental psychological distress, punitive discipline, and conduct problems (Gershoff, 2007; Kiernan and Huerta, 2008; Rijlaarsdam, 2013).

Family investment theory on the other hand is defined as the amount of money parents put into purchasing quality education, nutrition, health, good neighbourhood, and other inputs that improves a child's future well-being (Mayer, 2002). This investment is determined by a family's income. The investment model proposes that poverty restricts parents' ability to provide enriching educational experiences and services, as well as sufficiently nutritious diets. This in turn leads to lower cognitive abilities with potential consequences for other developmental domains (Mayer, 1997; Conger et al., 2010). Economic deprivation has been found to longitudinally predict low educational investment and consequently cognitive abilities (Kiernan and Huerta, 2008). Additionally, changes in parental economic circumstances predict investment in nutritious diets (Skafida and Treanor, 2014), and childhood malnutrition has been linked to low cognitive ability and conduct problems in adolescence (Galler, 2012). The two theories explicitly explain the reasons for the trend in Northern Nigeria.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were sourced through the use of questionnaire and interview methods. The key informants in the communities, various agencies and groups were interviewed where necessary. Through the interview and use of questionnaire in the North-Central, North-West and North-East geopolitical zones in Nigeria, the researchers were able to get adequate information on the casualties of child poverty in northern Nigeria. The researchers identified the various locations, causes and effects of the phenomenon in the region. The secondary data employed include existing literature on the topic such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, United Nations' publications, periodicals and other related documents. In the course of the research, the researchers consulted the internet and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Kano State University, Kano main libraries.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

The most recent drop in the child-poverty rate is due to a tighter labour market which the researchers discovered. More parents are back at work, with competition among employers starting to drive wages up even

for very low-income workers. That has helped to push the overall poverty rate down to 12.7 percent (Isaac and Danillo, 1967). That said, the near-halving of the child-poverty rate over the past half-century is not primarily due to improvements in the economy. In fact, stagnating wages reduced bargaining power, automation, and off-shoring have held down the earnings of families in the bottom of the income spectrum, and spiralling income inequality has meant that most of the gains of economic growth have gone to families at the top. Instead, it is the expansion of the safety net - in particular through the food-stamp programme and provisions like the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit - that has been most responsible for moving millions of kids above the poverty line over time (Isaac and Danillo, 1967).

High child poverty rate is higher in Africa than other continents in the globe, with devastating short- and long-term effects. When children grow up in impoverished households—a particular concern for children of colour, whose poverty rate is triple that of white children—it does not just mean worse grades, missed days of school, and skipped meals, researchers have found. It has profound, long-term effects, in terms of health, educational achievement, earnings, and even untimely deaths. According to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States' child-poverty rate is significantly higher than that in 30 other industrialized economies, including Poland, Mexico, and Estonia, as well as countries like Japan, Germany, and France (UNICEF, 2012). “Child poverty remains far too high in this country, particularly given how wealthy our country is,” Shapiro said. It’s still higher than in other, comparably wealthy countries. And even though government programmes have expanded, we still do far less to reduce child poverty than other nations. Many European countries, for instance, pay cash allowances to lower-income families with young children (Carson, 2012).

VII. OVERVIEW OF POVERTY SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Poverty level in Nigeria is high and over the last ten years, the quality of life of the average Nigerian citizen has progressively nose-dived. Available statistics indicate glaringly how precarious life has become for the average Nigerian citizen over the years in the face of suffocating levels of poverty (Nweke and Berman, 1985). The situation in the country becomes more pathetic when some comparisons are made with other less privileged developing countries in Africa and other parts of the third world. It is observed that Nigeria’s per capita income of \$240 in 1990 was well below the average of over \$500 for sub-Saharan Africa. The figure for Nigeria was well below that of Botswana (\$3,210), Cote d’Ivoire (\$6,600), Egypt (\$1,080), South Africa (\$3,500), and Mauritius (\$3,710)”. (Obadan and Odusola, 2001). The index when put side by side with numerical or financial analysis from Latin America and Asian countries, levels of poverty index in Nigeria appears more debilitating (Obadan et al). The level of poverty in Nigeria is equally conspicuous when other paradigms of welfare and social services and development are put into consideration. A tabulation of life expectancy of Nigerians, population per medical practitioner, population per hospital bed and the rate of infant mortality clearly reveals the pathetic conditions in which Nigerian people find themselves.

The Vision 2010 Committee Report in Nigeria as espoused by (Alimeka, 2001) indicates that:

50% of Nigerians currently live below the poverty line.

Only about 40% have access to safe drinking water.

About 85% of the urban population live in single rooms with more than seven (7) occupants of the average.

Only about 62% of Nigerians have access to Primary Healthcare Services.

Most Nigerians take less than one third of the minimum required balanced diets. Statistical analysis shows the high rate of poverty that defines Nigeria’s paradox of being a wealthy nation with high number of poor masses. These realities are much more obvious in rural areas and slums. In these places, people die because they cannot afford four hundred Naira (N400) Nigerian money to purchase needed medications or basic public healthcare items (Bala, 2012). Accordingly, the NBS estimated that this trend may rise further if the potential positive impact of several economic and employment generation intervention programmes of government falls through. The report reveals that 112.47 million Nigerian live below US \$1.00 per day and as a result could barely afford the minimal standards of food, clothing, healthcare, and shelter (Olufemi, 2012).

VIII. HIGH RATE OF CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN REGION OF NIGERIA

Just as needle injects content into the body, poverty remains a systemic menace breeding insecurity, socio-economic deprivation and instability, especially in the Northern part of the country where high level illiteracy and child destitution prevails. Poverty, in the analysis of United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. By this, it denotes susceptibility to violence, inaccessibility to basic needs, economic incapacitation and social exclusion (Inuwa, 2013). On health and education, the children level of immunization against dangerous childhood diseases, in the South-Eastern Nigeria is 44.6% immunization coverage, but the North-West has 3.7% and the North-East 3.6%. “If you take the education of the girl-child as indicator, you see similar pattern of inequality with the South-East having an

enrolment rate of 85%, South-West having an enrolment rate of 85%, South-South 75%, while the North-East 20% and North West 25%." Accordingly, the level of education of a people has direct correlation with their living standards and based on that correlation, Northern Nigeria was far behind all of humanity when it comes to Child Education. However, Northern Nigeria remains, and represents the only place in the world that has the highest number of child poverty and children that are not going to school (Ibrahim, 2014).

The resultant effects of poverty continues to prey on community and families' socio-economic decisions with rising perception of child marriage as opportunities to escape chronic poverty or alleviate socio-economic burdens. While there have been fruitless efforts at addressing early child marriage and Almajiri system (leaving one's home in search for Islamic knowledge) in the North owing to rampart socio-cultural beliefs, education remains to be the only plausible way to successfully combat the developmental threat. Educated families are more likely to practice family planning, and thus avoid having more children beyond their economic capacity. Educated parents are more likely to want education for their children as well (Inuwa, 2013). The Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria has long outlived the purpose it was earlier set to accomplish. Instead of being a breeding ground for the learned 'Ulamas' who are trained bearers of Islam as a religion, it has unfortunately become one of the major causes of poverty in Northern Nigeria and a veritable avenue for the mass production of miscreants, thugs and vagabonds (Carson, 2012). Through the system, children between the ages of 6 to 12 years are displaced mostly from rural areas by their ignorant parents to the cities, without provisions, to study the Holy Qur'an under harsh and despicable conditions. Apart from roaming the streets with cups and begging while dressed in rags, scavenging for food remnants, the children are involved in various kinds of forced labour and live under bridges, in motor parks, mosques or market stalls. This further exposes them to different kinds of health, physical and psychological hazards (Ngbea and Achunike, 2014).

The awful practice has resulted in anti-societal behaviours with many poverty-stricken children losing their lives to violence, jungle justice, hunger and diseases. After successful completion of the Holy Qur'an, they have prospects mainly in petty menial jobs. They are condemned to menial jobs, since they have no skills at hand. They resort to pushing wheelbarrow, touting and so on to earn a living (Dodo, 2012). They remain as untrained armies available to anybody poised to ferment trouble. They have their own axes to grind against their parents, authorities and the society at large. The system must be stopped, reviewed and integrated into our educational system. Meanwhile, poverty, poor educational attainment and strong social and religious traditions are drivers of child marriage and street begging in Nigeria. Most Nigerians agree that the current insecurity is worsened or aided by the high level of poverty in the northern part of the country (Dodo, 2012). Finishing school, especially secondary school is also crucial to breaking the cycle of child poverty, yet a significant portion of children in Europe do not finish secondary school. This is especially true of children belonging to minority groups, such as the Roma. Only about 15 percent of Roma children finish secondary school, according to the EU Commission (UNICEF, 2006).

IX. FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR INCESSANT RISE OF CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Most analysts agree that like the phenomenon itself, the causes of poverty in Nigeria are multidimensional. Economists have for example zeroed on both macro and micro factors as the culprits. The latter include declining productivity growth of the nation's economy, inflation, low utilization of industrial capacities etc. (Edoh, 2003).

X. UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME

Income inequality worsened from 0.43 to 0.49 between 2004 and 2009. This is correlated with differential access to infrastructure and amenities. In particular, there are more rural poor than urban poor. This results from the composition of Nigeria's economy, especially the energy (oil) and agriculture sectors. Oil exports contribute significantly to government revenues and about 15% of GDP, despite employing only a fraction of the population. Agriculture, however, contributes to about 45% of GDP, and employs close to 90% of the rural population (Abiodun, 2018).

XI. CIVIL AND ETHNIC CLASHES

Nigeria has historically experienced much ethnic conflicts. With the return to civilian rule in 1999, militants from religious and ethnic groups have become markedly more violent. While this unrest has its roots in poverty and economic competition, its economic and human damages further escalate the problems of poverty (Abdulqadri, 2013).

XII. POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Nigeria's large population and historic ethnic instability has led to the adoption of a federal system of government. The resultant fiscal decentralization provides Nigeria's states and local government's considerable

autonomy including control over 50% of government's revenues as well as responsibility for providing public services. The lack of a stringent regulatory and monitoring system, however, has allowed for rampant corruption. Resources which could pay for public good or directed towards investment (and so create employment and other opportunities for citizens) are being misappropriated. (Wikipedia, 2018).

XIII. ILLITERACY

In the sectors of health and education, the level of immunization of such children against dangerous childhood diseases, in the South-East Nigeria, 44.6% immunization coverage is maintained, while the North-West has 3.7% and the North-East goes with 3.6%. "If you take the education of the girl-child as indicator, you see similar pattern of inequality with the South-East having an enrolment rate of 85%, South-West having an enrolment rate of 85%, South-South 75%, while the North-East 20% and North West 25%." Accordingly, the level of education of a people has direct correlation with their living standards and based on that correlation, Northern Nigeria was far behind all of humanity when it comes to Child Education. However, Northern Nigeria remains, and represents the only place in the world that has the highest number of child poverty and children that are not going to school and they had earlier acquired education, they would have been more useful to themselves and the society (Ibrahim, 2014)

XIV. NEGLECT OF RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Rural infrastructure in Nigeria has long been neglected. Investments in health, education and water supply have been focused largely in the cities. The rural communities lack roads, good drinking water, hospitals, schools etc. as a result, the rural community is completely neglected and very poor.

XV. INCESSANT INCREASE IN THE NIGERIAN POPULATION

As the population swells up everyday especially from the North and puts pressure on diminishing resources, escalating environmental problems which further threaten food production. Land degradation as a result of extensive agriculture, deforestation and overgrazing is already severe in many parts of the country. Drought has become common in the North and erosion provoked by heavy rains, floods and oil pollution is a major problem in the South and Southeast. Other factors include; poor leadership, lack of comprehensive National poverty alleviation policy, lack of sound agricultural policy and protracted neglect of the sector, high level of illiteracy in the North, excessive external debt burden, child destitution in the Northern part of Nigeria and others. (Adeoti and Popoola, 2012).

XVI. BAD GOVERNANCE

Poverty is caused majorly by bad leadership and corruption which led to poor land utilisation and land tenure system, civil wars and unending political conflicts, poor infrastructure, diseases and poor health facilities, the World Bank and IMF policies, among others. According to the World Bank (1990), and the United Nations (1995), poverty has various manifestations which include the lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood, hunger, and malnutrition, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness, inadequate, unsafe and degraded environment, social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by lack of participation in decision-making in civil, social and cultural life (Olufemi, 2012).

XVII. CORRUPTION

The worsening intolerable level of child poverty in Nigeria is caused by reckless high-level of corruption in the country. The resources meant for the good and benefit of all are embezzled by the few. As rightly asserted by Adetoro (2012), corruption has eaten-deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society as the country was ranked as the 90th most corrupt nation in the world in 2001 (Transparency International Corruption Index, 2001). Virtually all the Nigerian ministries and agencies are enmeshed in corrupt practices with the police ranked as the most corrupt among them (Adetoro, 2012).

XVIII. IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN REGION OF NIGERIA TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Security as we all know is a major human need; it is paramount so much that absence of it will render people ineffective in spheres of life. Abraham Maslow in his classical work on human needs ranked safety/security as second (next to physiological needs) in the hierarchy of human needs. Traditionally, security of lives and property is the exclusive preserve of the state but the dynamics of the world today has clearly revealed that security is the responsibility of all (Abolurin, 2012). Security is generally concerned about the matter of safety, protection and preservation of core values and absence of threats to existing values. It also has

to do with liberty and shield from danger or from threats; to a state's capacity to protect and advance its veritable values and interests (Odunsi, 2013). Security is crucial to the survival of any nation-state.

XIX. COMPONENTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Wilson (2014) gave the various components of national security to include; **Political Security** which refers to protecting the sovereignty of the government and political system and the safety of society from unlawful internal threats and external threats or pressures. It involves both national and homeland security and law enforcement. **Economic Security** involves not only protecting the capacity of the economy to provide for the people, but also the degree to which the government and the people are free to control their economic and financial decisions. It also entails the ability to protect a nation's wealth and economic freedom from outside threats and coercion.

Human Security refers to a concept largely developed at the United Nations after the end of the Cold War. It defines security broadly as encompassing peoples' safety from hunger, disease, and repression, including harmful disruptions of daily life. Over time, the concept has expanded to include economic security, environmental security, food security, health security, personal security, community security, political security, and the protection of women and minorities. **Environmental Security** is an idea with multiple meanings. One is the more traditional concept of responding to conflicts caused by environmental problems such as water shortages, energy disruptions, or severe climate changes; it is assumed that these problems are "transnational" and thus can cause conflict between nations. (Wilson, 2014).

It has become a commonplace in the society that poverty is what is fuelling terrorism (Boko haram) in Northern Nigeria by creating a state of misery and frustration that pushes people to join Boko haram. Boko haram at the outset appeared to have had its operational bases located in the poorest parts of Northern Nigeria. Little amounts of money are offered to the poverty-stricken children and are easily conscripted into the dreaded group. It is in such places where people have been denied opportunity to go to school as well as have meaningful economic sources of livelihood that recruitment is the easiest. Boko haram leaders are aware of it and of course are maximizing the advantages of that obvious truth. The long and short of it is that with entrenched poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, we cannot eliminate the menace of Boko haram or similar security threats (Abiodun, 2016). High level illiteracy in Northern Nigeria is also both a product and driver of poverty in Northern Nigeria. These, dynamically reinforces each other. When a young man is poor, illiterate and unemployed, he becomes a clean slate for any kind of brainwashing. The brainwashing given to them provides a quasi-equivalent of employment and thus feels engaged in acting out what they have been brainwashed upon. This is the kind of situation we find with the phenomenon in the North (Olufemi, 2012).

Another effect of poverty in the North is child destitution and political thuggery. This pushes children to develop an antisocial behaviour that acts as a psychological protection against their hostile environment. Begging seems to have become a profession in the North as the streets of Northern cities are filled up with beggars. Crime varies over time and space; it is high in specific areas and low in others, usually with huge differences in wealth. It is unquestionable that political thuggery and other crimes rank high in the North as a result of poverty as the uneducated youths in the North nurture more unemployment and crime (Dodo, 2012). Other problems of poverty in the north include: precarious livelihood, excluded locations, physical limitations, gender relationships, problem in social relationship, lack of security, poor leadership, abuse by those in power, disempowering institutions, limited capabilities etc. The prevalence of begging in northern Nigeria in whatever form is indisputably prompted by chronic and excruciating poverty which is worsened by population explosion that is in a stiff competition for limited and dwindling economic resources. Northern Nigeria has the highest poverty rate in the country which is almost endemic in rural areas. This predicament pushes both children and adults into the cities in search of ways and means of survival (Raah International Development, 2013).

The poverty situation has increasingly led to all sorts of criminal activities in the region; people are being killed and massacred on daily basis. The killings recorded in Zamfara, Yobe, Taraba and others are the resultant effects of child poverty in the region. Also, the Northern region of Nigeria has the highest record of cases of kidnapping. Recently, the former Air Vice Marshal Alex Badeh was killed on his way home from his farm with bullets while his friend was kidnapped for ransom of about N100million (The Punch, 2018).

Nigeria is currently bedevilled with profound threat of prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping and human trafficking. Several streets and hotels in the state are observed to be littered with various young girls looking for "clients" at nights, just to make ends meet. Arms are being proliferated at will, to get involved in robberies as a result of poverty while numerous are being trafficked across nation's borders in order to conquer poverty at all costs. However in the North-Eastern part of the country. In the last six years, the country has witnessed the vulnerability of terror, criminality and instability and it is disheartening experiencing the devastation and annihilations of several banks, towns, villages, churches, mosques, Police Stations, schools and other public institutions with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) bombs while being attacked by fierce-looking armed robbers. (Abiodun, 2016).

XX. VARIOUS STEPS TAKEN BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IN TACKLING CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Over the years, the Nigerian government has launched various programmes ostensibly targeting poverty reduction. A few of these programmes are:

Universal Primary Education (UPE) – meant to ensure free primary education is acquired by all Nigerians.

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) – launched to ensure adequate food productions by every Nigerian.

Green Revolution (GR) – for food production in large quantities.

National Accelerated Food Production Programme - for food production in large quantities for the masses.

Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank – to assist farmers get adequate resources for food production.

National Directorate of Employment (NDE) – to ensure every Nigerian is engaged in one skilled job or the other.

Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) – to oversee food production, road and other rural infrastructures.

Better Life for Rural Women – to provide supports for women in rural communities in order to cater for their families.

Family Support Programme (FSP)

Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)

Poverty Alleviation Programme

National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

Sure-P Programme and You-WIN – providing job opportunities for employed graduates with monthly stipends

Introduction of School Feeding and currently N-Power programmes in some states of the federation

However, these programmes have largely failed to overcome the motives for their introduction; due to corruption, ethnic conflicts and political instability (Edoh, 2003). These programmes individually or collectively failed to have any meaningful impact on the lives of Nigerian citizens. The relevant question to ask is why have these programmes failed to reduce poverty and better the lives of Nigerians. Ojeme, (2016) argued that: Poverty reduction programmes in the country have only benefited those who designed and implemented them while the poor are left “drier” The fact is that the various programmes as “Better Life for Rural Women”, “Family Support Programmes”, primarily benefited, supported and advanced the monetary and property urge and interests of the wives of heads of state, governors and local government chairmen who embezzled and stole vast resources appropriated for poverty reduction in Nigeria during the last two decades (Ojeme, 2016). In addition, the Northern elites who make up the Northern Governors’ Forum and the Arewa Consultative Forum in Nigeria have been much more curious to know the root causes of poverty phenomenon ravaging the entire northern region and deduced the reason they have failed to be in tandem with the other parts of the country. What they lack is the will power to eradicate poverty in the region; none of them is ready to nip the problem in the bud. Lamenting about poverty and unemployment in the North will not solve the problems other than making concrete moves to tackle the issues (The Daily Sun, 2017).

XXI. RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO REDUCE CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

In order to reduce the level of child poverty in Northern Nigeria, the following recommendations are very germane:

i. The poor children should be enrolled in schools to study, giving them opportunity to be more productive especially in the mainstay of the Northern region economy and agriculture. The truth is that, the majority of them stay back in the city when they come of age. Thus the intensity of joblessness, urban-rural population disparity, political tuggery and poverty would have been reduced.

ii. The Federal Government of Nigeria should embark on actions and steps that would improve and boost the nation’s economy in all ramifications, as this would definitely reduce poverty amongst all Nigerians.

ii. The Northern region governments have to enlighten and educate their populace about the ill-consequences of polygamy and birth control. The pervasive abuse of polygamy that abounds in the region whereby women are married and re-married as often as they are divorced and re-divorced due to lackadaisical attitude towards their religion, has warranted many to bear children more than they can cater for, which is absolutely condemnable.

iii. The Northern Governors’ Forum and Arewa Consultative Forum in Nigeria are enjoined to put more gear towards gathering more towards socio-economic development as a central point of northern unity in all ramifications; as the core economy of northern Nigeria is largely agricultural based and not oil.

iv. The Northern Governors’ Forum – a meeting of elected political leaders should lead to the eradication of poverty while the other groupings like Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama’a Nasirul Islam (JNI) should through, preaching of moral methods, get the political class committed to actions that are likely to reduce the level of poverty in the region.

- v. The NBS (National Bureau of Statistics) report points clearly to the fact that Nigeria will not likely meet the United Nations' target on the Millennium Development Goals – to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015. The northern states are the greatest beneficiaries of these goals if achieved. It is in our best interest if the Northern Governors' Forum takes the NBS' report as an opportunity to dialogue with the federal government to produce positive steps that would oversee poverty growth in the north.
- vi. The need for establishment of a Ministry for Northern Affairs, saying it could be a solution to the security challenges in the North. According to him, the Ministry should be saddled with the responsibility of tackling widespread unemployment and poverty in the area.
- vii. Boosting employment in the North must mean full and equal opportunities for all, irrespective of sex. There is no way a society will make women unproductive and be sane or economically viable. This is what is happening in the North.
- viii. In order to eradicate poverty in the North, the Northerners must have to embrace western education to reduce illiteracy. There is the age-long cultural belief that the Western Education is contradictory to the whole essence of Islamic belief. This is ingrained in the belief that the western education called Boko is of Christian-Europe origin and anti-Islamic.
- ix. The call for true political will in Northern Nigeria on the part of their leaders. The political leadership in Northern Nigeria is absorbed in self indulgence to the neglect of the ignorant poor populace which is helping in aggravating poverty in Northern Nigeria.
- x. Nigerian borders need to be secured as a measure to reduce the influx of beggars from foreign countries. With the porosity of our badly policed borders, several poor children from other countries find their way into Nigeria under the pretext of Islamic scholarship; their large number is worsening the poverty situation in the Northern Nigeria.
- xi. There is need for the Nigerian government to take decisive steps in identifying and repatriating all illegal foreigners who are in the north, back to their respective countries.

XXII. CONCLUSION

That child poverty that exists in northern Nigeria is not an exaggeration; it is a real and devastating phenomenon. It is also a fact that the country harbours most of the poor people in the North. There is high level of poverty in Northern Nigeria in spite of abundant human and natural resources endowed. What exists is the poor management of these resources as a result of poor governance and corruption. State governments particularly in Northern Nigeria should introspect and begin to re-align their spending more towards attracting, protecting and retaining both local and foreign investors in the solid mineral and agricultural sectors in the region. They should embark on enhanced social investment and enforcement of mass education.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Abdulqadir, I. (2013) 'The Almajiri System of Education in Nigeria' today.<http://www.gamji.com/article5000/news5956.htm>. Retrieved on 17/09/2017.
- [2]. Abiodun, T. (2016) 'An Appraisal of Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Policy: The Case of Boko Haram' in Akinwunmi and Olaniyan (eds) *Global Perspectives in Education: A Book in Honour of Late Prof. Mobolaji Ogunsanya*, Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan: His Lineage Publishing House, Ibadan.
- [3]. Abolurin, A. (2012) 'Civil Populace, Internal Security and National Development: Any Hope?'^{2nd} Faculty Personality Lecture Series; Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan: His Lineage Publishing House, Ibadan.
- [4]. Adeoti, A. and Popoola, O. (2012) 'Determinants of Child Poverty in Rural Nigeria: A Multidimensional Approach'. *Global Journal of Human Social Science, Arts & Humanities*, Volume 12, Issue 12 Adetoro, R. (1982) 'The Impact of Jalumiwar (1878) on the people of Ikirun'. Being a long essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the award for the Nigerian
- [5]. Certificate in Education (NCE) to the Department of History, Oyo (now Osun) State College of Education, Ila-Orangun, Nigeria.
- [6]. Adisa, T. (2012) 'Security Agencies Uncover Source of Boko Haram's Explosives'. *Nigerian Tribune*, 21 February, 2012.
- [7]. Auwal, S. (2012) 'Northern Nigeria: surfacing poverty on untapped wealth.' [http://www.gamji.com article](http://www.gamji.com/article). Retrieved on 07/06/2017.
- [8]. Bala, M. (2013) 'Almajiri: A memo to the Sultan'. *Weekly Trust Newspaper*, Saturday, June 29, pp3, 2013.
- [9]. Berkowitz L. (1989). Frustration-aggression hypothesis: examination and reformulation. *Psychol. Bull.* 106, 59–73. 10.1037/0033-2909.106.1.59
- [10]. Boss P. (2017). *Family Stress Management: A Contextual Approach*, 3rd Edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [11]. Butty, J. (2012) 'Corruption partly blamed for poverty in Nigeria'. *Voice of America* on the 13/02/2012, 7:00 pm
- [12]. Carson, J. (2012) 'No end to Boko haram without tackling poverty'. *The Nation*. Friday, May 8, pp12, 2012.
- [13]. Conger R. D., Conger K. J., Martin M. J. (2010). Socioeconomic status, family processes and individual development. *J. Marriage Fam.* 72, 685–704. 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00725

- [14] Dodo, N. (2012) 'Northern Governors and the fight against poverty'. From <http://www.cenbank.org>. Retrieved on 11/06/2012.
- [15] Edoh, T. (2003) 'Poverty and the survival of Democracy in Nigeria'. In Nigerian Journal of Political and Administrative Studies. (Makurdi Aboki Publishers)" vol 1, No. 1, pp30 – 45,
- [16] Galler J. R. (2012). Infant malnutrition predicts conduct problems in adolescents. *Nutr. Neurosci.* 15, 186–192. 10.1179/1476830512Y.0000000012
- [17] Gershoff E. T., (2007). Income is not enough: incorporating material hardship into models of income associations with parenting and child development. *Child Dev.* 78, 70–95. 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.00986.
- [18] Inuwa, K. (2017) 'The North and Almajiri Phenomenon'. [http://www. Gamji.com/article8000/news8282.htm](http://www.Gamji.com/article8000/news8282.htm). Retrieved on 17/09/2017.
- [19] Kankwenda, M. (2002) 'Poverty Eradication: Where Africa Stands', (Economics publishers), London, Obadan, M. and Odusola, A. (2001) 'The economy and poverty in Nigeria' paper presentation at National conference on law and poverty. Kaduna: NIALS June 26-28, pp4 – 6, 2001.
- [20] Kiernan K. E., Huerta M. C. (2008). Economic deprivation, maternal depression, parenting and children's cognitive and emotional development in early childhood. *Br. J. Sociol.* 59, 783–806. 10.1111/j.1468-4446.2008.00219
- [21] McCubbin H. I., Joy C. B., Cauble E. A., Comeau J. K., Patterson J. M., Needle R. H. (1980). Family stress and coping: a decade review. *J. Marriage Fam.* 42, 855–871. 10.2307/351829
- [22] Odunsi, A. (2013) 'Poverty Ravaging our Land: Challenges to National Security', Stone age Publishers, Australia Ojeme, T. (2016) 'Kidnappings in the Southern Nigeria': Reported on FRCN, 22 Dec., 2016.
- [23] Olufemi, A. (2017) 'Boko haram and Poverty in Northern Nigeria.' From [http://www.punchng.com/opinion/bokoharam-and-poverty-in-northern Nigeria](http://www.punchng.com/opinion/bokoharam-and-poverty-in-northern-Nigeria). Retrieved on 07/06/2017.
- [24] Mayer S. E. (1997). *What Money Can't Buy: Family Income and Children's Life Chances*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [25] Mayer S. E. (2002). *The Influence of Parental Income on Children's Outcomes*. Wellington, NZ: Knowledge Management Group, Ministry of Social Development.
- [26] Nweke, P. and Berman, E. (1985) 'Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Regions', Geneva: Small Arms Survey Publication.
- [27] Olufemi, A. (2012) 'Boko haram and Poverty in Northern Nigeria'. From [http://www.punchng.com/opinion/bokoharam-and-poverty-in-northern Nigeria](http://www.punchng.com/opinion/bokoharam-and-poverty-in-northern-Nigeria). Retrieved on 07/02/2018.
- [28] Ra-ah International Development, Almajiri Project in Northern Nigeria. From <http://www.almajiriproject.in> Northern Nigeria.mht. Retrieved on 18/08/2013.
- [29] Rijlaarsdam J., Stevens G. W. J. M., van der Ende J., Hofman A., Jaddoe V. W. V., Mackenbach J. P., et al. . (2013). Economic disadvantage and young children's emotional and behavioral problems: mechanisms of risk. *J. Abnorm. Child Psychol.* 41, 125–137. 10.1007/s10802-012-9655-2
- [30] Skafida V., Treanor M. C. (2014). Do changes in objective and subjective family income predict change in children's diets over time? Unique insights using a longitudinal cohort study and fixed effects analysis. *J. Epidemiol. Commun. Health* 68, 534–541. 10.1136/jech-2013-203308
- [31] Tarbo, N. (2005) 'Poverty of the mind. Abuja Nigeria': (McDaniel's Media Consult), Nigeria.
- [32] The Daily Sun, 2017: Lack of Political to End Poverty in Northern Nigeria, 22 June.
- [33] The Punch, 20 December, 2018
- [34] UNICEF (2006). "The State of The World's Children
- [35] UNICEF (2009). "The State of The World's Children
- [36] UNICEF (2012). "The State of The World's Children
- [37] UNICEF (2017). "The State of The World's Children
- [38] United Nations (2012) 'Indicators of Poverty and Hunger'.
- [39] United Nations (2012), Indicators of Poverty and Hunger. .
- [40] Wikipedia, (2012) 'Poverty in Nigeria'. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/poverty in Nigeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/poverty_in_Nigeria). Retrieved on 07/06/2012.
- [41] Wikipedia, (2017) Poverty. From <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/poverty>. Retrieved on 07/06/2017.
- [42] Wikipedia, (2006) Poverty. From <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/poverty>. Retrieved on 07/06/2006.
- [43] Wilson, B., 2014. *Arms and Dimensions of National Security*. Dublin. Stone-age Publishers.
- [44] World Bank, (2012) 'Poverty and Inequality Analysis'. worldbank.org. Retrieved on 06/10/2018.
- [45] www.worldometer.com