
CHILD POVERTY IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIAL WELFARE INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual study examines child poverty in Nigeria, the implications and social welfare support for needy children. Child poverty is a social problem in Nigeria, and its effects are notable in the country as it cut across, quality of the labour force, academic achievement, public loyalty and the economy. Large household size, parent's education, poor governance, corruption, unemployment, and inadequate health and sanitation infrastructure were identified as factors associated with child poverty in Nigeria, responsible for childhood malnutrition, school dropout, discrimination, increased crime rate. This study found that due to Nigeria's low GDP and colossal population, government-sponsored child welfare programs are few in Nigeria; nevertheless, international agencies support the country in fighting poverty with the collaboration of social workers (counsellors).

Keywords: Child Poverty, Inequality, Social Welfare, Children

1. INTRODUCTION

Child poverty in Nigeria is a social problem that needs attention because of its effect on the skill level of the future labour force, crime level and overall economy of the country. This study examines the causes, effects and social welfare support of child poverty in Nigeria. Inequality is frequently discussed in Nigeria's child poverty literature, and this study also investigates the relationship between child poverty and inequality in Nigeria. This conceptual study uses previous related literature on child poverty in Nigeria.

2. POVERTY IN NIGERIA

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported in 2019 that 40% of the overall population, or 83 million people, live below the poverty level of 137,430 naira (\$381.75) per year. This report and data have worsened due to the COVID19 issue, which has increased the country's unemployment rate. In 2019 (GDP: 448.1billion USD and population: 201 million) the population increased while the GDP declined from 2020 (GDP: 432.3billion USD and population: 206.1 million). Child poverty in Nigeria Every year, almost 2.5 million children under five suffer from severe acute malnutrition (sam), exposing them to common childhood illnesses like diarrhoea, pneumonia, and malaria. According to Save the Children's study, "Children continue to die from preventable infections like pneumonia, diarrhoea, and malaria, and hunger contributes to half of mortality of children under five." Nigeria has 10% of the world's out-of-school children (4.7 million) and over 60% of the population lives in poverty". Child poverty and hardship are pervasive in Nigeria, according to a recent government study endorsed by UNICEF. Children in urban areas face multidimensional poverty at a higher rate than children in rural areas at 28%.

2.1 Factors associated with child poverty in Nigeria

Researchers such as (Adeoti and Popoola, 2012) and (Edoh, 2003) agreed with Chimobi (2010) that the causes of poverty in Nigeria are multifaceted; however, Chimobi identified some common factors associated with poverty in Nigeria, including the country's poor educational system, lack of economic diversification, unemployment, income inequality, corruption, and laziness. One could agree with Muhammad Alkali et al. (2020), who claim that huge resource theft, poor management, sociocultural difficulties, and corruption are to blame for Nigeria's current child poverty situation. Furthermore, in Nigeria, child poverty is measured using two methods: money-metric and non-money-metric. Researchers agree that the non-money-metric (multidimensional) approach is the best way to quantify child poverty since it considers household size, age of household members, and gender, whereas money-metric measures just look at income. When employing a multidimensional approach, Haveman et al. (2015) suggest that households in need of basic necessities such as medical care, clean water, food, shelter, education, and social inclusion are more likely to be recognized. Minujin et al. (2006) and Dunga & Makhalima both agree with this viewpoint (2016). Conversely, the household income approach is still the most prevalent way to evaluate poverty in industrialized countries, according to Foster et al. (2013) and Ogwumike & Ozughalu (2018). The non-monetary technique was utilized by Ogwumike and Ozughalu (2018), Adetola & Olufemi (2012), Aliyu & Garba (2012), and Bamiduro & Ogwumike (2009) to explore child poverty in Nigeria. The factors related with child poverty in Nigeria, according to Adetola & Olufemi (2012), are large household size, parent's education, unemployment, and inadequate health and sanitation infrastructure.

3. Effect of Child Poverty in Nigeria

In Nigeria, millions of children are malnourished; UNICEF estimates in 2020 that 2 million Nigerian children are chronically malnourished, with 32% of children under five being severely impaired. Currently, just 2 in 10 malnourished children have access to medical care. Undernutrition at an early age

affects brain growth and intellectual quotient. Researchers like Dunga & Makhlima (2016) Chzhen et al. (2016) found that Child poverty affects children's health, development, and academic performance. This can be traced to academic underachievement among school children today, notably in Nigeria's Northern area. Furthermore, because these children come from low-income families and cannot afford an education, they will return to the labour market system as low-skilled workers, leading to a labour shortage in the coming decades, affecting the country's general economy and increasing crime rates.

4. Solidarity and Social Inclusion Problem in Nigeria (Argumentation)

In Nigeria, significant economic inequality manifests itself in daily challenges. In 2010, about 112 million people were poor. The richest Nigerian man will take 42 years to spend all of his wealth at 1 million each day, according to estimates by OXFAM (2017). Due to corruption and bad governance, jobs and social amenities are not equally distributed in Nigeria, and children from poor homes face prejudice and deprivation while seeing their wealthy peers have all they need. This article argues that inequality is a cause and effect of child poverty in Nigeria. Inequality causes a loss of interest in being a loyal citizen who should obey laws, pay taxes, and engage in solidarity activities, which negatively impacts Nigeria's growth and development.

5. Social Work and Child Poverty in Nigeria

The Nigerian Federal Government has yet to adopt the legislative framework for social work practice in Nigeria. There are very few government-sponsored child welfare programs in Nigeria due to economic issues and low taxation; parents are responsible for their children. Nonetheless, foreign NGOs like UNICEF, WHO, Save the Children and others help the Nigerian government fight poverty. Counsellors at schools, hospitals, and municipal governments deliver NGOs' social services to needy families and children. Practitioners from each state's human affairs ministry support the work of counsellors licensed by the Counselling Association of Nigeria, this association is also responsible for the supervision of the counsellors. Needy individuals are screened for social welfare eligibility; because of the enormous population, resources are always limited.

6. DISCUSSION

The study of Kenneth et al (2021) explore Nigerian children perception about poverty. Most defined poverty as “a situation when someone does not have money in the family” and to some poverty is “situation in which one begs and borrows” this qualitative research is interested in children voice on poverty, Kenneth et al further inquire from the children about their perception on the effect and solution of poverty. They identify the following as effects: “Parents won't be able to pay school fees” “Children won't be fed well” and “Makes you feel intimidated and despised”. For solution, they highlight: “Government should create jobs”, “Go to school (get educated)”, “The rich in the community could form a group and find a way to help the poor” Government need to make things cheaper. From the children's comments, it can be determined that they are influenced by their parents' financial situation, recognize social inequity, and expect the government to help them.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article examines child poverty in Nigeria, its causes and effects, and how it affects communal loyalty and solidarity. Unfortunately, due to Nigeria's low GDP and huge population, the government do not have a working policy and social benefit to protect vulnerable or needy children, leaving parents to care for their children. This study also covers the role of NGOs and their partnership with counsellors who operate as social workers in Nigeria in determining needy individuals' eligibility for social support donated by international, local NGOs, and philanthropists. Despite the fact that there are counsellors in every school, hospital, and local government in Nigeria, not every child's needs are satisfied. This study advises the Nigerian Government to promote free education, job creation, free healthcare, equitable distribution of social facilities, and food subsidy for the poor.

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