

Citizens' Perception of Poverty Alleviation and Youth Employment Strategies of Yobe State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The menace of poverty and its consequential effects on the State and the citizenry is much alarming in most part of Nigeria and Yobe State inclusive. Whereas extensive effort exists among government, non-governmental and other development partners in curbing worrisome situations executed through concerted developmental projects and programmes. In most respect, the perennial efforts of the governments and non-governmental groups in combating the poverty has yield less as the incidence continued to manifest both in the social and political livelihood of the vast majority of the population. This study thus investigated the perceptions of the citizens toward the strategies and programmes adopted to cushion the effect of the poverty among youth in Yobe state. The study is designed on a survey approach with which data was collected through structured questionnaire administered on 100 participants that were scientifically selected through probability approach. The data revealed an inefficiency of poverty alleviation programmes in curtailing the poverty crisis in the state. Others are poor technical knowledge of programmes, improper selections of beneficiaries, politicization of programmes, lack of awareness and non-inclusion of target beneficiaries in decision processes among other reasons undermining the successes of the programmes. The study recommends that government and development partners should prioticise the bottom –top approach to their decision processes. Thorough public and community awareness campaigns should be taken before any mobilization of programmes.

Keywords: *Poverty, Programmes, Youth, Government, Strategies*

Introduction

Poverty is a pervasive phenomenon affecting substantive size of the world population. The over increasing rate of poverty has been a topical public discourse in recent times (Ogbuabor, Malaolu, Elias 2013). Poverty has been a serious problem in Nigeria since the country's political independence in 1960. Successive Nigeria governments have adopted different policy measures and initiatives with a view to mitigating the problem. In spite of increasing investment committed through annual budgets and donors on poverty alleviation programmes, yet, indices suggest less than 50% of Nigerians still live in relative poverty with over a third of the population languishing in extreme poverty. According to Chibuzor (2015) poverty is fundamentally is a denial of choices and opportunities and lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. In addition to the deprivations of individuals to actualize their live objectives, poverty is also identified as the main agent of the perversity of violence conflict and social upheavals around the world. Most disturbingly, United Nations in its vicious cycle of poverty described poverty as the key driver to social instabilities around the world.

Whereas it is a global trend, in Nigeria, evidence suggest that the menace of poverty was on the increase in spite of the aggressive measures by the government and development partners since the return of the country into democratic rule in 1999.

Although past regimes in Nigeria had attempted to tackle poverty through the creation of institutions and agencies such as Bank of Agriculture, Development Bank, Family Economic Advancement programme (FEAP), River Basin Authorities, Operations Feed the Nation, Rural Banking, Universal Basic Education (UBE), Directorate of Food, Roads

and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and similar agencies, with the view to empower the participants, yet all of these programmes had minimal impact on the livelihood of people. Even though high incidence of poverty cut across the nation, another dimension to understand poverty situation in Nigeria is through its political geography. Analyzing the northern and southern part of the country, National Bureau of Statitics (2010) report indicates that most of the Nigeria's northern states are the ones is worst hit by poverty. Whereas the north western and north eastern zones having the maximum number of people living along the poverty lines. The poverty situation in the north is further justified in the lack of access to social amenities; health, education, capital and other important amenities that are lower in the region and thus indicating worst human development outcomes. However, despite the fact that south western region emerges with the lowest level of poverty in the country put at 59.1%; the situation is still unacceptable as more than half of its people are also considered poor.

Whereas poverty is a general problem in Nigeria, however, the youth who hold the largest share of the country's population account for large quantum of the poverty rate. The nexus between youth education, poverty and unemployment toward economic growth and development of countries has been discussed in successive literature. For instance, the empirical work by Akpoko *et al* (1998) revealed a significant impact of on the effort of non-governmental agricultural extension training programme on the adult youth's livelihood both in respect to ownership of commercial vehicles, personal drives of motor-cycles, three cycles bicycles, passionate clothing, food crops and food consumption as a result of their participation in the programme.

In Yobe state, the population of whom was predominantly youths, the government has given

due consideration to youth in socio-economic development. Successive governments in the state over the years been developing and implementing various project and programmes with the grand support from the Federal Government at meeting the needs of citizenry and eradicating poverty. In a bid to overcome poverty, to address this phenomenon, the Yobe state Agency for Community and Social Development, under the Ministry of Youth and Social Development was charged with the responsibility of addressing endemic unemployment and wide spread poverty especially among the rural population through numerous programmes and projects. It is on this note that this study assessed the impact of poverty alleviation programmes on youth economic empowerment among the residence of Yobe State. Besides the literature credence, the study is a policy science, the importance of which beyond the relevance to Yobe State, it may stand to benefit other states and countries facing similar socioeconomic crisis in their jurisdiction. In addressing its objectives, the article proceeded in four sections. In section one, the article explained the methodological approach of the study, section two is a brief review of literature, section three is the presentation of data and section four is the conclusion and recommendation of the study.

Conceptual Clarifications

There seems to be no single universally acceptable definition of poverty because scholars have ascribed various meanings to the term. The World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen (1995) define poverty as any condition featured by severe deprivation of fundamental rights and basic human needs including food, sanitation facilities, education and information. It also includes inadequacy of income and productive resources to carter for individuals sustainable livelihood.

Moreover, Harry Johnson (1974) defined poverty as “a situation when the resources of individuals or families are inadequate to provide a socially acceptable standard of living” In other words; the individuals live below the conventional poverty line demarcating the poor from the non-poor. The government in 1922, described poor people as “not having enough to eat, a high rate of infant mortality, a low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, poor water, inadequate health care, unfit housing and lack of active participation in the decision making process “(Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development, 1992:13).

Renowned Nigeria professor, Pat Utomi (2006) clarified poverty as a condition linked to hunger, malnutrition which humiliates and dehumanizes its victims. From the foregoing, poverty can be described as a situation where a community of people cannot afford the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter which are necessary for human existence. Such communities are just in existence but not living a normal human life.

According to the United Nations Economic and Human Development index (HDI), any person in a community that is living daily below two (2) USD dollars is claimed to be poor. Other conditions and manifestation of poverty includes lack of basic human needs such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, shelter and other basic needs because of the inability to afford them. It is estimated that about 70% of the Nigerian population are under this situation

Methodology

This is a survey research; the empirical data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed on five level scales of Rensis Likert. A total of 100 questions were administered, but only ninety-two (92) were retrieved. Moreover, out of

the 92 respondents retrieved, 7 are people with Senior Secondary Certificate Examination as their highest qualification, 13 possess National Diploma qualification, while 16 possess Higher National Diploma. Others are 16 bachelor degree, 6 with Master's degree, 3 doctorate of

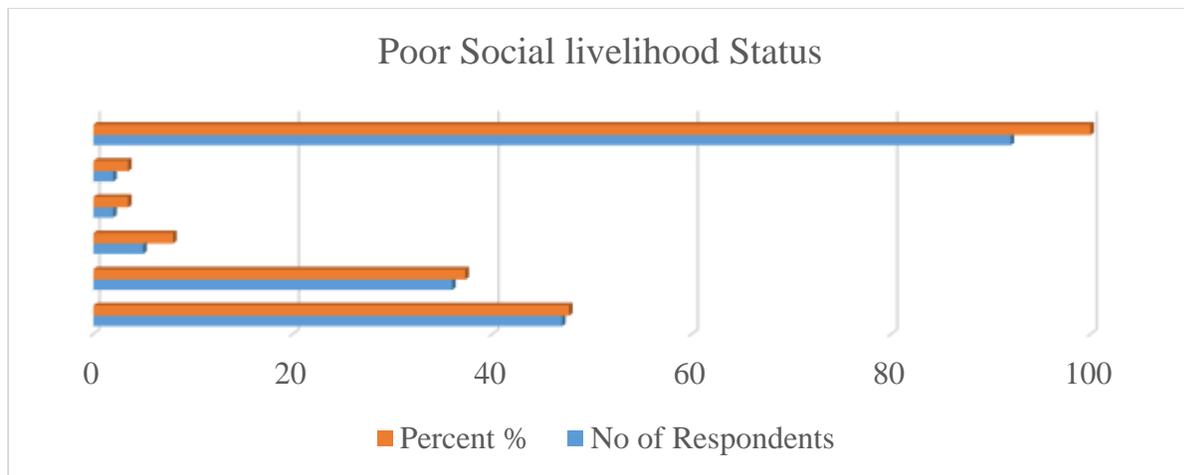
Philosophy, 20 National Certificate of Education and 11 without any formal qualification. In respect to gender, 52 of the 92 returned were answered by male and 40 respondents are female. In respect to their income distribution, the table below shows the categories of the respondents.

Table 4.1 Respondents Level of Income in a Month

Household Income	No of Respondents	Percent %
5,000 – 10,000	20	24.7
10,000 – 30,000	32	30.3
30,000 – 70,000	27	26.3
70,000 and above	13	18.7
Total	92	100

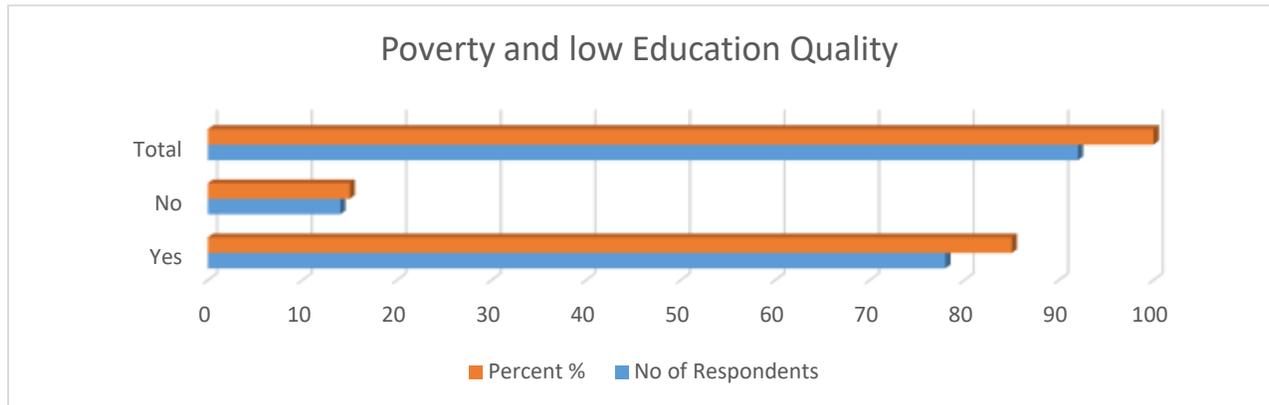
Source: Field Survey (2023)

Chart 4.1: Poverty Situation



Source: Field Survey (2023)

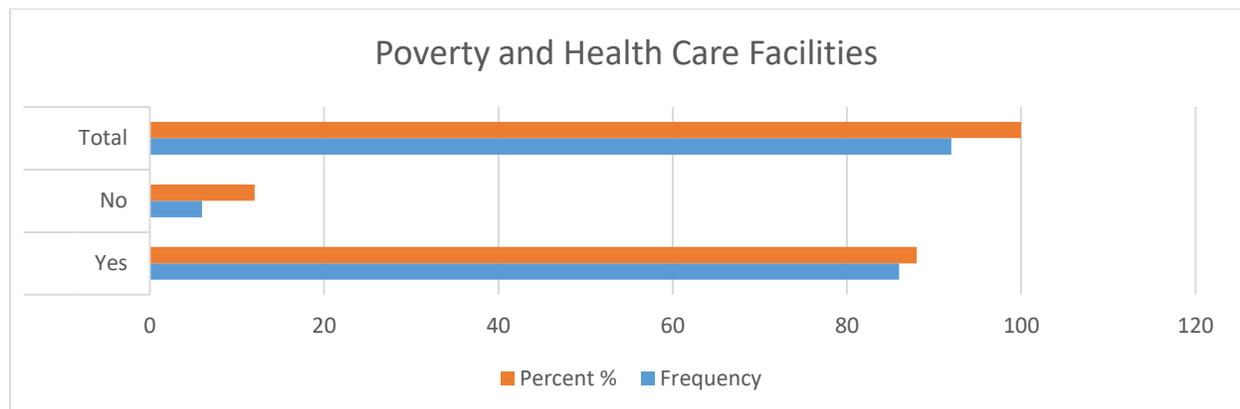
Chart 4.2: Poverty goes with low Educational Opportunities



Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the chart above, the respondents answered question pertaining to if poverty goes with low educational opportunities, 77.7(85%) respondents answered yes and agreed while 14(6%) did not respond.

Chart 4.3: Poverty goes with inadequate health care facility

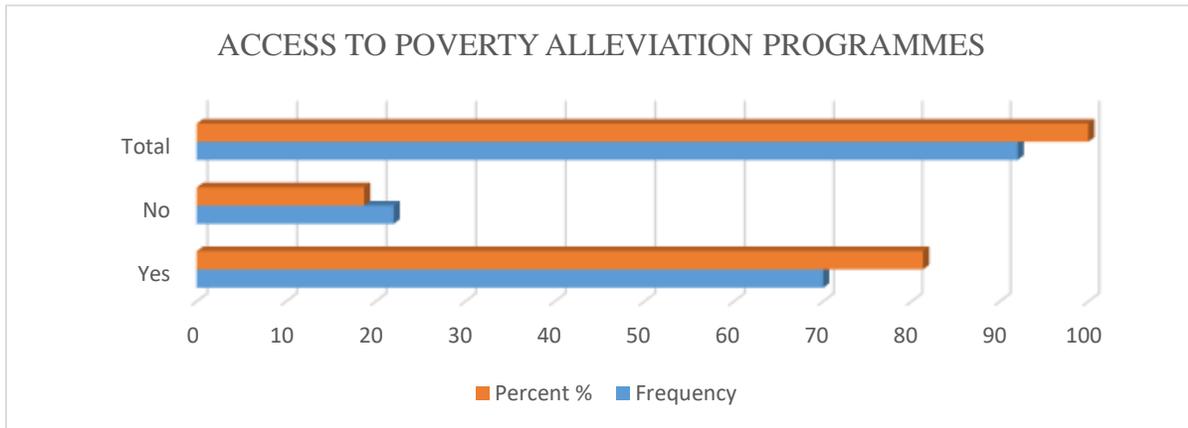


Source: Field Survey, 2023

Also, from the table above, the respondents were asked if poverty goes with inadequate health care

facility, almost all 86(88%) respondents agreed and responded yes while 6(12%) disagreed and did not respond.

Chart 4.4: Have you heard about any Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Damaturu Metropolis

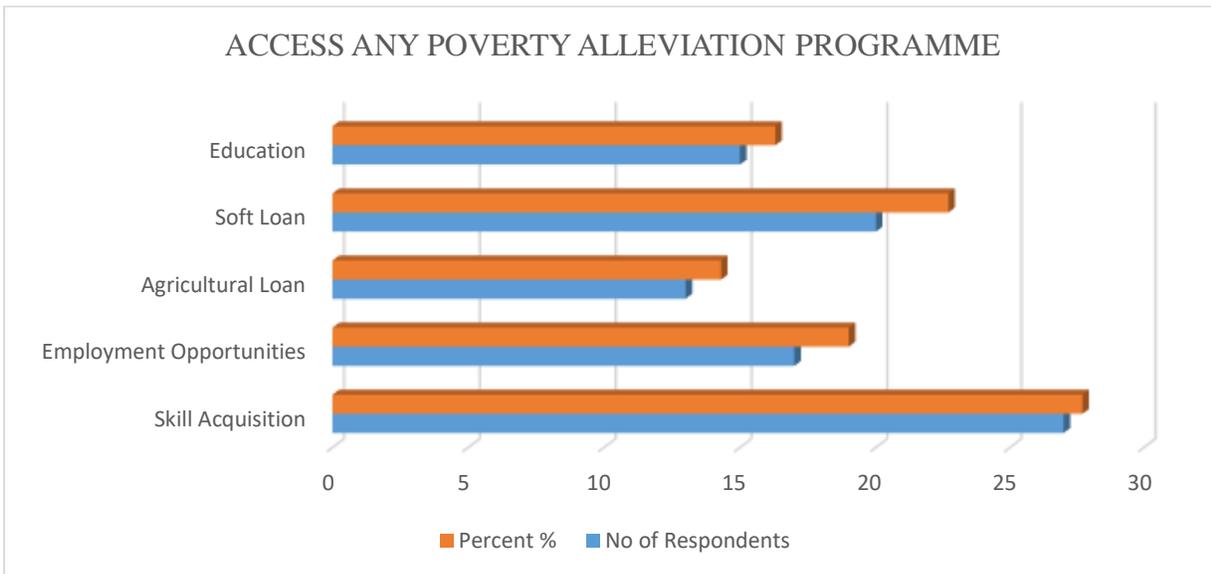


Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the chart above, the respondents were asked if he or she has heard about any form of poverty alleviation programmes, more than half 70(81.3%) respondents responded yes to the question while 22(18.7%) of the total respondents

answered no. In respect to benefits from a particular programme, about 25.3% respondents answered yes while 74.7% answered no. That means that only 20% out of the 92 of those who heard about poverty alleviation benefitted from it.

Chart 4.5: Access Any Poverty Alleviation Programme



Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 4.2: The Programme has improved the People's life in Damaturu Metropolis

Options	No of Respondents	Percent %
strongly agree	7	9.3
Agree	14	15.3
Undecided	27	29.7
Disagree	26	27.0
strongly disagree	18	18.7
	92	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table above shows the responses of respondents when they were asked if the poverty alleviation programmes in Damaturu metropolis has improved the lives of people in their locality, 7(9.3%) respondents strongly agreed, 14(15.3%)

respondents agreed that indeed the programmes has improved lives in their locality, while 27(29.7%) respondents were indecisive while 26(27.0%) respondents disagreed, 18(18.7%) respondents strongly disagreed.

Table 4.3: How would you Rate the performances of Yobe State Ministry of Youth and Social Development towards poverty alleviation.

Options	No of Respondents	Percent %
Excellent	3	3.3
very good	5	5.7
Good	12	12.3
Fair	20	20.7
Poor	31	31.3
very poor	26	26.7
	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table above shows the responds of respondents when they were asked to rate the performance of Yobe State Ministry of Youth and Social Development, 3(3.3%) respondents responded excellent, while 5(5.7%) respondents

answered very good, 31(20.7%) respondents answered poor which is the highest, 26(18.7%) responded very poor. It is therefore clear that the performance of Yobe State Ministry of Youth and Social Development is said to below average.

Table 4.4: Which sector do you think Yobe State Ministry of Youth and Social Development should focus on in order to reduce poverty.

Options	No of Responses	Percent %
Agricultural	12	13.0
entrepreneurial skill	16	17.3
Industrial	24	25.0
Education	15	16.7
social infrastructure	14	15.7
All	11	12.3
	92	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table above shows the respondents answer when they were asked which sector they think Yobe State Ministry of Youth and Social Development should focus on in order to reduce poverty, 12(13%) said agricultural sector, while 16(17.3%) said entrepreneurial skill, 24(25.0%) said industrial sector, 15(16.7%) said education sector, 14(15.7%) said social infrastructure, 11(12.3%) prefers all the mentioned sectors. Due to closeness of these responses even though industrial sector carries the highest responses, one cannot over emphasize the need for improvement in all of these sectors. Therefore, going by the statistics from the respondents Yobe State Ministry of Youth and Social Development should work more to improve the industrial sector especially as it is with the most perception from responses taken.

Conclusion

This study revealed that the menace of poverty and youth unemployment and underemployment continued to flourish on the social, economic and political lives of the citizens in Yobe State. The trickledown effect of this manifest not only on dilapidated standard of livelihood, but it has aggravated the security existence of the state. The authors may argue that the prevailing crisis of youth restiveness, banditry, militancy and other social delinquency in the recent years should be

connected to this incidence. It is in this respect and the interest of cushioning the poverty menace, the article proceeded to offer the following recommendations.

1. One significant flaw in the policies and programmes of poverty reduction in Nigeria is the failure to effectively target the poor as well as focusing on specific target, community and their specific poverty related problems in addressing them. Therefore, government and her development partners should ensure that policies and programmes are designed to target the rightful beneficiary.
2. Endemic corruption has bedeviled various antipoverty programmes of government and the manifestations and problems associated with corruption in Nigeria have various dimensions. These corrupt practices include project substitution, misrepresentation of project finances, diversion of resources, and conversion of public funds to private uses among many others. Anti-corruption agencies should gear off and checkmate the progress of each programme at different phases of implementation.
3. Poor coordination of programmes; The uncoordinated collaborative efforts between the state, market, and civil

society are hampering government interventionist programs.

4. A deep disconnection between the government socio economic policies and poverty reduction is a challenge for Nigeria's government. On against the top-down strategies of programme decision, the article recommend that a bottom-up strategies should be adopted in programme decisions about poverty alleviation programmes.

Acknowledgement

The authors wishes acknowledge the **Tertiary Education TrustFund** in Nigeria for supporting the project. Special Thanks to the Management of Mai Idris Aloomo Polytechnic Geidam and all participants that volunteered in the data.



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