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A Systematic Assessment of Anti-poverty Programmes in Nigeria

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Abstract

The rising poverty level in Nigeria since 1999 prompted the designing and implementation of different anti-poverty programmes to assist the poor to escape poverty. This study systematically assesses the impact of these interventions. A systematic search was conducted electronically for qualitative studies that used mixed method analysis. Inclusion criteria were met with eight studies. All the included studies used interviews as methods of data collection. Income, entrepreneurial development, expenditure, job opportunities, welfare, access to health and education, empowerment and quality of life were the domains reported by the studies reviewed. There is evidence of anti-poverty programmes in reducing poverty among poor households. There is weak evidence suggesting anti-poverty programmes have a positive impact on household expenditures, employment, income, agricultural development and the quality of life of beneficiaries. There is negative evidence showing that anti-poverty programmes not impacting on access to health and education and the affordability of health services and education. Despite the not too impressive results, anti-poverty programmes can act as tools for mitigating poverty if were planned and implemented.

Key Words: Anti-poverty programmes, intervention, microcredit, Nigeria, poverty.

Introduction

The poverty level in Nigeria has increased significantly since 1999 when democratic governance was reintroduced (Awojobi, 2014c). Data from the Brookings Institute revealed that Nigeria is currently the world capital of people living in extreme poverty (Kharas, Hamel, & Hofer, 2018). The trajectories of the findings suggest that Nigeria has around 87 million

people in extreme poverty and six people fall into extreme poverty every minute (Kharas et al., 2018).

Since 1960, after Nigeria gained independence from the British Colonial Master, successful governments have been designing and implementing anti-poverty programmes to help the poor live above the national poverty line (Awojobi, 2014b). The government focuses most of these anti-poverty programmes to women in order to assist them in their bid to escape poverty (Awojobi, 2014a). Women represent a bulk of the poor and are usually the poorest and some programmes that have been initiated to support them in Nigeria including the Better Life of Rural Women, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and Microfinance Institutions (Awojobi, 2014a).

Empirical evidence has proven that anti-poverty programmes assist the poor to escape poverty. In India, a social intervention for the poor, Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) implemented in Odisha State has a positive impact on the beneficiaries (Swain, 2015). The intervention increased the annual net income of 43.86 per cent of the beneficiaries, reduced the incidence of poverty of the poor households and the social empowerment of women significantly improved (Swain, 2015). In Mexico, PROGRESA (Programa de Educación, Salud, y Alimentación), a conditional cash transfer programme has proven to be quite successful in improving the conditions of the poor (Gantner, 2007). For example, secondary school attendance has increased by over 20 per cent for girls and 10 per cent for boys in beneficiary households (Gantner, 2007). PROGRESA also reduced the incidence of illness for children by 12 per cent lower, increased household food expenditures by 13 per cent higher, increased the number of prenatal visits in the first trimester of pregnancy by 8 per cent (Gantner, 2007). Despite the impacts, there have been challenges and disappointments in the programme (Gantner, 2007). In Philippine, the study by Oguejiofor & Unachukwu (2014) found mixed results of the impact of microcredit to the poor.

The positive impact that has been associated with anti-poverty programmes prompted this study to assess some of the anti-poverty programmes in Nigeria and that is the specific objective of this study. The study used a systematic review method for the assessment of these anti-poverty programmes. Systematic reviews are regularly adopted in the health sciences and subsequently social sciences. Other disciplines such as the Arts and Humanities are now adopting systematic reviews in their research. For example, Fehrmann and Hawkins (2015) listed some research topics on a systematic review method in the Humanities.

Materials and Methods

An electronic web search was carried out with the aid of Google search engine. Key search items were used to identify relevant literature. Search items that were searched for relevant literature included government policies on poverty reduction, anti-poverty reduction strategies and poverty reduction programmes.

Relevant studies were included in the systematic review if they meet specific requirements. For instance, studies that report any link between poverty programmes and poverty reduction were included. Studies that also employed different methodological approaches in evaluating the impact of anti-poverty programmes formed part of the included studies. Excluded studies include those that do not have a sample size, findings and do not report poverty reduction outcomes. Also, studies that were not peer-reviewed sources such as grey literature, policy paper, newspaper articles and online website information were excluded. This study aimed to test a hypothesis: Anti-poverty programmes, *ceteris paribus*, enhance poverty reduction among beneficiaries.

The study systematically extracted the following information from the included studies. Data that were recorded include:

- Descriptive information
 - ✓ Publication data (citation)
 - ✓ Location
 - ✓ Intervention
 - ✓ Inclusion and exclusion information
- Methodology
 - ✓ Data collection methods
 - ✓ Impact measured
 - ✓ Study characteristics

While there are quality assessment tools to assess the quality of studies, the study did not use any of these tools. Rather it employs its own assessment mechanism to assess selected studies. Precisely, methodological quality was assessed of the selected studies.

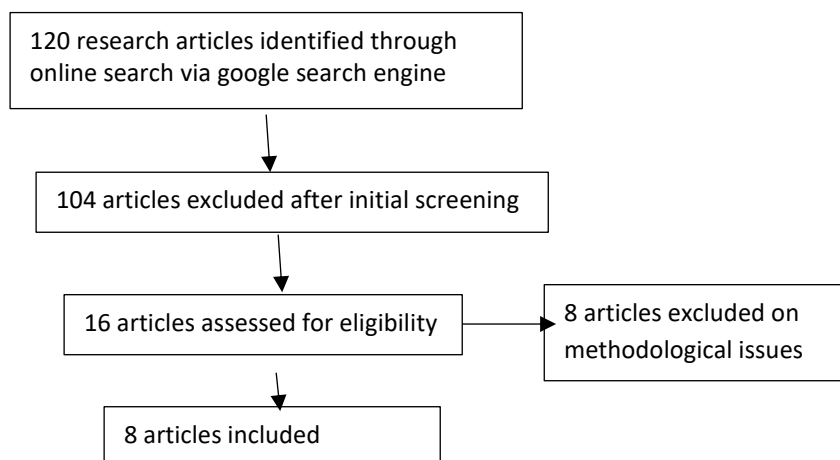
This systematic review did not incorporate a meta-analysis. In this case, a qualitative synthesis was adopted for analysing the data. Coding was used to identified salient information. From the initial coding themes or categories were developed and a narrative synthesis was used to interpret the themes.

Results

Study selection

An online search for relevant literature via Google search engine produced 120 literature based on titles. The screening of these articles' titles and their focuses as it relates to the study's objective led to the exclusion of 104 articles. Some articles were also excluded due to duplication. The retaining of 16 articles led to further screening of abstracts and full-text, due to methodological issues, 8 articles were excluded leading to the retaining of 8 articles that were included in the systematic review. Figure 1 presents the study flow of the systematic review.

Figure 1: Flow diagram of the systematic review



Study characteristics

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the included studies. The studies were conducted between 2008 to 2017. The geographical location of the studies shows that one study was conducted in the southeast, two in the southwest and two in the south-south. Two other studies were conducted in the northeast and one in the northwest. Data sample varied from 60 to 566 participants.

In terms of methodology, all the studies used mixed methods and questionnaire as methods of data collection. Additionally, one study incorporated focus group discussion to its data collection method. The main interventions are different anti-poverty programmes from federal, state governments and NGOs. Impact issues measured by these studies include expenditure, entrepreneurial development, and poverty incidence, depth and severity. Others are improved farming, income and job opportunities.

Table 1: Key study characteristics

Study	Location	Data sample	Methods	Data collection method	Anti-poverty intervention	Impact measured
Agbaeze & Onwuka, 2014	Enugu State	Selected rural farm households	Mixed	Questionnaires and interview	Microcredit	Expenditure (food and non-food)
Antai & Ekpenyong, 2014	Cross River State	361 beneficiaries of conditional cash transfer	Mixed	Questionnaire	Conditional Cash Transfer	Entrepreneurial development
Fakayode et al. 2015	Ondo State	60 beneficiaries and 60 non-beneficiaries		Structured questionnaire	*IFAD/FGN intervention	Poverty incidence, depth and severity
Halidu et al. 2017	Gombe and Kaduna State	362 respondents	Mixed	Questionnaire	In Care of the People, Village Economic Development Solutions, inter alia: Farmers Empowerment Programmes	Improved farming,
Oluyole, 2012	Ogun State	Farming households	Mixed	Structured questionnaire	Micro-credit	Level of income
Deedam & Onoja, 2015	Rivers State	385 indigenous women	Mixed	Questionnaire	Rotatory credit schemes, cooperative society, community-based organization	Income
Shawulu et al. 2008	Taraba State	566 respondents	Mixed	Focus group discussion, questionnaire	Youth empowerment scheme	Income
Yamta & Midala, 2014	Borno State	138 staff of poverty reduction Ministry, 570 beneficiaries of the programme	Mixed	Questionnaire	Agricultural development programmes	Job opportunities

Note: * International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Federal Government of Nigeria IFAD/FGN

Intervention characteristics

The various interventions of the included studies were meant to reduce poverty among the beneficiaries of the schemes. The interventions consist of agricultural implements, microcredit,

empowerment scheme, and cash transfers. The target group are young people, farmers and women. Intervention details are highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2: Intervention characteristics

Study	Intervention	Target group	Objective(s)
Agbaeze & Onwuka, 2014	Microcredit	Selected rural households	To provide financial services to the poor
Antai & Ekpenyong, 2014	CCT	Vulnerable groups	To enhance the entrepreneurial capacity of citizens
Fakayode et al. 2015	IFAD/FGN	Farming households	To reduce poverty among farmers
Halidu et al. 2017	NAPEP, FEP, VEDS	Farmers in rural communities	To empower farmers
Oluyole, 2012	Micro-credit projects	Farming households	Increasing investment in farming business
Deedam & Onoja, 2015	PAP	Port Harcourt indigenous women	To reduce poverty among women
Shawulu et al. 2008	Youth empowerment Scheme	Secondary school leavers, unemployed graduate	To tackle youth unemployment
Yamta & Midala, 2014	Agronomy and seed development, Livestock Development, Fisheries Development	Unemployed youths and women farmers, school leavers, and graduates in agriculture or related disciplines	To reduce poverty in the agricultural sector by developing and empowering people

Impact of anti-poverty programmes

The included studies reported more on the impact of anti-poverty programmes on income generation (3), but less often on other domains such as expenditure, agricultural development, access to health and education, affordability of health services and education, entrepreneurial development. Others are quality of life, welfare and empowerment. A comprehensive analysis of the included studies and the detailed impact reported by each on the various domains is presented in Table 3.

The impact of anti-poverty interventions on income was reported by some studies. For instance, studies in Ogun (Oluyole, 2012), Rivers (Deedam & Onoja, 2015), Taraba (Shawulu, Adebayo, & Binbol, 2008) and Gombe and Kaduna States (Halidu, Saleh, & Jamilu, 2017) reported an increase in income to beneficiaries after joining anti-poverty programmes. While the findings of the study in Ogun state (Oluyole, 2012), show strong evidence on the positive impact on the anti-poverty programmes and income level, the findings from the studies in Rivers, Gombe and

Kaduna, and Taraba State (Deedam & Onoja, 2015; Shawulu et al., 2008) also show a positive impact, but with weak evidence.

In Cross River State, strong evidence shows that CCT led to entrepreneurial development for the youths (Antai & Ekpenyong, 2014). In Enugu State, weak evidence submits that microcredit enhances the increase in households' consumption (Agbaeze & Onwuka, 2014). To explain this, microcredit was found to have increased consumption of beneficiary households with access to credit facility than households without access to microcredit. Furthermore, the incidence of poverty of the former was (0.52) when compared to the latter (0.75). Another study on anti-poverty interventions in Gombe and Kaduna States highlighted the politicization of the interventions, modern agricultural equipment and other facilities to support farming were given to farmers at random based on their political connectivity and patronage (Halidu et al., 2017).

There is weak evidence that anti-poverty interventions have a positive impact on the welfare of beneficiaries, quality of life, employment and agricultural development. For example, In Ondo State, the IFAD/FGN programme has enhanced the beneficiaries' welfare by reducing their poverty status, however, similar poverty concerns were still observable among the beneficiaries with poverty incidence of 66%, depth 10% and severity 1.7% (Fakayode, Adesanlu, Olagunju, & Olowogbon, 2015). What this indicates is that only 34% of the beneficiaries were considered not poor compared to around 20% of the non-beneficiaries (Fakayode et al., 2015). In Taraba State, the beneficiaries of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) gave in a conflicting report on the impact of the scheme on the quality of their life, the scheme was able to impact some beneficiaries and it did not make any meaningful impact on others (Shawulu et al., 2008). Agricultural development and employment generation were the outcomes of the study in Borno State. The interventions by the government aim to support agricultural development vis-a-vis improving the living standard of farmers, however, the magnitude of the impact is minimal compared to the fund that has been allocated to aid poverty reduction scheme (Yamta & Midala, 2014). Similarly, the government interventions have also led to the decrease in unemployment for the youths in Borno State, nevertheless, there a lot of youth that remained unemployed in the State (Yamta & Midala, 2014).

Among the included studies, only one study reported no impact of the anti-poverty programmes in Gombe and Kaduna States (Halidu et al., 2017). It was discovered that NAPEP did not favour many beneficiaries in the areas of economic empowerment, access to healthcare and education, and the affordability of healthcare and education.

Status of hypothesis

Based on the foregoing review, the study status of hypothesis: 'Anti-poverty programmes, *ceteris paribus*, enhance poverty reduction among beneficiaries' is summed up in the last column of Table 3.

The last column of Table 3 declares that out of the 8 included studies, 6 validate the hypothesis while 2 studies' status of hypothesis is mixed.

Table 3: Status of hypothesis and the strength of evidence on the impact of different types of anti-poverty schemes on certain domains in Nigeria

Study	State/location	Intervention	Outcomes	Results	Judgement	Support for the hypothesis
Agbaeze & Onwuka, 2014	Enugu	Microcredit	Expenditure	Beneficiary households had per capital expenditure at ₦1, 898.23 per week while the non - beneficiary had ₦1, 476.19	Weak positive	Yes
Antai & Ekpenyong, 2014	Cross River	CCT	Entrepreneurial development	Chi (9.49), tested at .05 level of significance	Strong positive	Yes
Fakayode et al. 2015	Ondo	IFAD/FGN intervention	Welfare	Poverty measures (incidence, depth and severity) of beneficiaries were lower compared with non-beneficiaries	Weak positive	Yes
Halidu et al. 2017	Gombe & Kaduna	NAPEP, FEP, VEDS	Empowerment Access to health & education Income generation Affordability of healthcare & education	<i>Empowerment:</i> 204 respondents disagreed that the scheme has empowered farmers as against 49 who agreed <i>Access to healthcare and education:</i> 173 respondents rejected that the scheme has improved access to basic health and education while 76 respondents accepted <i>Income generation:</i> The scheme has improved income generation as agreed by 189 respondents, 85 respondents objected to this <i>Affordability of healthcare & education:</i> 53 respondents agreed to this while 199 respondents disagreed	Negative Negative Weak positive Negative	Mixed
Oluyole, 2012	Ogun	Micro-credit projects	Income	Beneficiaries mean annual income before the intervention was below ₦150,000 it rose above the amount after the intervention	Strong positive	Yes
Deedam & Onoja, 2015	Rivers	PAP	Income	75% of beneficiaries experienced an increase in income of about 36.6% after joining anti-poverty schemes	Weak positive	Yes
Shawulu et al. 2008	Taraba	Youth empowerment Scheme	Income Quality of life	<i>Income:</i> Beneficiaries of the two schemes had a mean monthly income of ₦3,259 and ₦8,790 before the intervention. However, the mean monthly income rose to around ₦4,126 and	Weak positive	Mixed

				₦17,010 respectively after the intervention <i>Quality of life</i> : 39.5% of beneficiaries acknowledged that the intervention did not improve their quality of life as against 13.8% who answered in the affirmative. However, 50.3% of the beneficiaries said if there was any improvement in their quality of life, it was not quite significant	Negative/weak positive	
Yamta & Midala, 2014	Borno	Agronomy and seed development , Livestock Development , Fisheries Development	Agricultural development Employment generation	<i>Agricultural development</i> : 69.02% of beneficiaries agreed the scheme provided agricultural development as again 28.01% <i>Job creation</i> : Job opportunities verify by the Mean and Standard deviation of 18.92 ± 1.89 as against the mean and standard deviation of 7.60 ± 1.111	Weak positive	Yes

Discussion

This study assessed the impact of anti-poverty programmes and it is considered as the first systematic review to empirically examine the impact of different anti-poverty programmes in Nigeria. The findings of this study have shown that anti-poverty programmes can lift people out of poverty. Poverty is multidimensional and poverty reduction strategies can have a positive impact on various domains. For instance, there is strong evidence that an anti-poverty programme can influence entrepreneurial development and income generation (Antai & Ekpenyong, 2014; Oluyole, 2012). Other empirical studies have supported this hypothesis. In South Africa, desk research and a qualitative study found that government anti-poverty imitative allowed the poor beneficiaries of the scheme to expand their businesses and moved out of poverty (Mensah & Benedict, 2010). An empirical review of literature by Hussain, Bhuiyan, & Bakar (2014) reveals that government support in the form of anti-poverty strategies prompted entrepreneurship development which stimulated employment and reduced poverty. Aside from the entrepreneurial development due to anti-poverty programmes, there is also the connection of developing the economy. In Nigeria, informal entrepreneurs' activities significantly contributed to the growth of the economy in 2014 (Awojobi, Ayakpat, & Adisa, 2014).

According to Ludi (2016),

Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and

inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion – UN (p. 1).

Money can mitigate the severe conditions of poverty (Sawhill, 2003). Cash transfer is one mechanism stakeholders are using to boost poor household income in Nigeria. Income has a strong positive impact in Ogun State for people that have access to microcredit (Oluyole, 2012). But in Gombe, Kaduna, Rivers and Taraba States the evidence of income impacting on the beneficiaries was weakly positive. This implies that despite the anti-poverty programmes that made the beneficiaries to have access to income, some of them still live below the poverty line because they were unable to meet up with the expenditure level that is required to enable them to live above the poverty level (Agbaeze & Onwuka, 2014).

For Gustafson (2018), “A focus on the agricultural sector is a necessary condition for sustainable poverty and hunger reduction” – (Deputy Director-General, FAO, 2018). The Nigerian government has been giving agricultural resources to poor farmers to increase their productivity and income thereby bringing them out of poverty. The impact of agriculture inputs and credit facility to support employment, increase income and reduce poverty among farm households in Borno State show weak evidence. The weak evidence relates to the fact that despite the government's intention to create employment and reduce poverty through agricultural development, poverty continues to increase in the State. Only the few that have access to the government anti-poverty programmes can boast of having improved living conditions (Yamta & Midala, 2014).

The poor are those whose corresponding expenditure or income drops below the poverty line (Luttmer, 2001). Creating employment and income to poor households will increase their household expenditures as well as improving their welfare and quality of life. However, the findings from this study show that the impact of microcredit on household expenditures in Enugu State was a weak positive. The case of Gombe and Kaduna States show a negative impact. NAPEP did not allow poor beneficiaries to have access to health and education as well as affordable healthcare. This implies that access to anti-poverty programmes in the State was not enough to lift the beneficiaries of the schemes out of poverty (Agbaeze & Onwuka, 2014). Similarly, the government schemes failed to empower the beneficiaries, and that was the reason the beneficiaries were unable to increase their household consumption.

The consequence of anti-poverty programmes not meeting the needs of the poor makes them not to have improved quality of life. Though the findings from this study show that welfare and the quality of life of poor beneficiaries in anti-poverty programmes increased in Ondo and Taraba States, the impact shows weak evidence.

The findings of this study support the view of development experts that considered anti-poverty programmes as antidotes to extreme poverty in developing countries (Eryong & Xiuping, 2018; Reeves, 2015). Though the findings of the study were able to reveal that anti-poverty programmes in some states in Nigeria were able to aid poverty reduction but with 7 weakly positive impacts, 2 strongly positive impacts and 4 negative impacts. The judgements on the impacts of the anti-poverty programmes of the studies reviewed were based on (i) the number of beneficiaries that agree, disagree and those that remain neutral on the impact of the schemes, (ii) the used of significant impact and none significant impact and (iii) the overall judgements of the impact of the various schemes on the different domains by the included studies.

This study encountered some limitations. For instance, the findings from some included studies were clumsy which made it difficult for the understanding of the interpretation of their results. Secondly, a questionnaire was the method of data collection used by all the included studies, the interview outcomes from the questionnaire were not straightforward. Some respondents agreed or disagreed to some questionnaire while others remained neutral. Placing a final judgement on the outcomes of these interviews was a bit complex because of the need to avoid bias. Finally, only qualitative interviews were used to gather data in the included studies and their findings cannot be generalised in the analytical term. Future studies that will include different data collection methods and study design, for example, randomised control trials and quasi-experimental methods are needed to evaluate the impact of anti-poverty programmes in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Anti-poverty programmes have strong potential to reduce poverty by increasing income, employment, expenditure and the quality of life of poor households. This highlights the seriousness of anti-poverty programmes as mechanisms capable of reducing poverty among poor households.

In sum, there is strong evidence that anti-poverty programmes improve entrepreneurial development and income in terms of reducing poverty. There is weak evidence suggesting anti-poverty programmes have a positive impact on household expenditures, employment, income, agricultural development and the quality of life of beneficiaries. There is negative evidence showing that anti-poverty programmes not impacting on access to health and education and the affordability of health services and education.

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