

INFLUENCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN IKWERRE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

Franca Onuoha Nwagu¹

&

Doreen Kobani, PhD²

**Department of Adult Education and Community Development,
Faculty of Education**

**Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, P.M.B.5080
Port Harcourt, Nigeria.**

ABSTRACT

The study examined the Influence of Good Governance on Poverty Alleviation in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population of the study comprised 3,420 members of community-based organization in 7 communities in Ikwerre local government area. The population of the study comprised 3,420 members of community-based organizations in 7 communities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. The stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select a sample of 1,026 members. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. An instrument titled “Influence of Good Governance on Poverty Alleviation Questionnaire (IGGPAQ)” was used for data collection. The reliability index is 0.80. Three research questions were posed. They were analyzed using simple percentages and weighted mean. The study found amongst others that building accountable institutions as a means of controlling corruption drastically reduces poverty in the society. It was recommended amongst others that Ikwerre Local Government Council should ensure the improved access to education in order to increase the level of education of the rural people and reduce the number of poor people in communities.

Keywords: Influence, Good Governance and Poverty Alleviation.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times in Nigeria, increasing attention of academic and political discussions is directed at issues of poverty and poverty alleviation. Poverty is one of the major problems facing Nigeria as a nation. It has often been implicated in the rising cases of banditry and the emergence and sustainability of armed groups such as Boko-Haram, Niger Delta Militants, unknown gun men in the South East and others; with the attendant consequences of insecurity to lives and properties in the country.

Concept of Poverty

Poverty as a concept has been viewed in varied perspectives by scholars.

Olujimi and Bako (2018) defined poverty as a state of being in which individuals and groups lack basic necessities of life and are less privileged than other members of the society.

Chukwu (2015) asserted that poverty is the state of one who lacks certain amount of material possessions or money. It is one who lacks basic human needs, which commonly includes clean and fresh water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, and shelter.

Fundamentally, poverty is 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 and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, 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 (Kobani & Alozie, 2019). It means susceptibility to violence, and implies living in marginal or fragile environments without access to clean water or sanitation (United Nations, 2010).

From the foregoing it is established that poverty entails lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society, due to not having enough money to feed, clothe and shelter a family and not having a job to earn one's living and lack of collateral security to obtain credit facilities from individuals of financial institutions. Poverty is deprivation in well-being, and which arises when people lack key capabilities and so have inadequate income, education, poor health, and security, lack self-confidence, are powerless and the absence of rights.

Poverty Situation in Nigeria

There is mass poverty in Nigeria which affects the majority of the population. Chukwu (2015) revealed that more than 70% of Nigerians lack the usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions needed to lead a happy life. He stressed that poverty in Nigeria is extreme and ranges from absence of basic amenities like water,

hospitals and electricity, good roads and good schools to absence of security and general hopelessness.

Nigerians are living the lives they did not choose and which they have not completely resolved to do away with. There is frustration on the faces of over 90 million people who are living on less than one US Dollar per day (Ejiofor, 2010). Only a small fraction of Nigerians have genuinely crossed the poverty line through hard work, perseverance and a state of luck sometimes. The severity of poverty in Nigerian is very glaring when other indicators of services and development are considered. The outcome of this was succinctly captured in the Report of the Vision 2010 committee which revealed that:

1. About 50 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line.
2. Only about 40 percent have access to safe drinking water.
3. About 80 percent of the urban population lives in overcrowded and slum housing environment.
4. Only about 62 percent of Nigerians have access to primary health care.
5. Most of Nigerians take less than one-third of the minimum required protein and vitamins (NEPC in Olujimi & Bako, 2018).

According to Olujimi and Bako (2018) the World Bank President Jim Yong Kim reiterated that Nigeria was one of the top five countries that has the largest number of the poor. About 7% of the world poor live in Nigeria. Nigeria has about 7 people going into poverty every minute in spite of being an oil-rich country. Thus, Nigeria is being paradoxically described as “rich country, poor people”.

To sum up, the poverty situation of the Nigerian society today is that majority of its members are living in a state of destitution while the insignificant minority are living in affluence. This situation is continually becoming worsened as a result of high profile level of corruption endemic in the political class coupled with insecurity of lives and properties characterized by incessant killings, kidnappings and crimes that are induced by poverty.

Concept of Poverty Alleviation

To alleviate is making something less severe (Hornby, 2010). Oviasuyi (2020), posited that poverty alleviation refers to all the methods, ways or techniques adopted by government, non-governmental organizations, or wealthy individuals to reduce or eradicate poverty from a collectivity. According to Oviasuyi, poverty alleviation is best approached as an exercise in raising people's capabilities or enhancing freedom. The corollary of this approach to development is empowerment, which is, helping people in poverty to acquire the tools they need to meet their basic need as the long-term solution to poverty.

Reducing poverty is the fundamental objective of economic development. Poverty alleviation programmes are necessary due to the scourge that crept into the nation economy, especially among rural folks. However, successive governments in Nigeria have consistently made impressionistic efforts at poverty alleviation as they have tried different policies and programmes geared towards reducing the level of poverty in the society through a number of ways. First, through the activities of the ministries/agencies; second, by collaborating with international agencies; third, and more importantly, through the establishment of agencies equipped solely to fight rising poverty and unemployment in Nigeria (Oviasuyi, 2020).

However, various environmental and Nigerian factors/challenges have affected the proper implementation of the programmes. Consequently, they have not been able to alleviate the poverty of Nigerians. Some of the challenges that have led to the failure of the poverty alleviation programmes, according to Oviasuyi (2020), include corruption, bad governance, destructive, epileptic electricity supply, lack of proper education, mono-economy, value system, large unproductive population, government policies, and finance, among others.

Concept of Good Governance

Governance as a concept is as old as human civilization. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2019) asserted that governance means the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented.

United Nations Human Rights Commission (2018) posited that governance refers to all the processes of governing, the institutions processes and practices through which issues of common concern are decided upon and regulated.

Fukuyama (2013) maintained that the true test of good governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights, civil, culture, economic, political, and social rights. According to him, there are two dimensions to qualify governance as good or bad: the capacity of the state and the bureaucracy's autonomy. They both complement, in the sense that when the state is more capable, for instance, through the collection of taxes, they should be able to conduct things well without being instructed with a lot of details.

Rotberg (2014) opined that another way to think about good governance is through outcomes. Some governments carry out their goals like the provision of public goods to its citizens; there is no better way to think about good governance other than through deliverables, which are precisely the one demanded by citizens, like security, education, water, the enforcement of contracts, protection of property, protection to the environment and their ability to vote and get paid fair wages.

The former UN Secretary – General Kofi Annan in Wikipedia posited that good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration. To implement this, the UN follows some principles which include: participation, rule of law, consensus oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

Control of Corruption as an Attribute of Good Governance for Poverty Alleviation

Scholars have defined the term ‘corruption’ in various ways. Adeyinka (2017) defined corruption as lack of transparency; the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit.

Pauly (2017) viewed corruption as an abuse of office for personal gain; any act (illegally or intentionally carried out provided it can confer certain benefits on the actor or actors) by a public official, which violates the accepted standard of behaviour required of the office/position in order to serve private or selfish ends. The ends may be social, economic or political, but is unethical as they negate the ethics, norms/values of the society, since the ultimate beneficiary is the individual actor and not the entire society.

Doumbia (2020) posited the combination of political, economic, and institutional features of good governance, especially the control of corruption and regulatory quality, improve the income of the poor and decrease poverty. Good governance, as embodied, for example, in the control of corruption and the design and implementation of effective regulatory policies, significantly improves the ability of the poor to participate in and benefit from economic growth.

Building accountable institutions is one of the ways of fighting corruption and alleviating poverty, prosperity and the quality of a country’s institutions typically go hand in hand. Governments with well-run, accountable institutions are better able to deliver public goods and support an environment that can generate jobs and growth (Indrawati, 2016).

Improved Access to Education as an Attribute of Good Governance for Poverty Alleviation

Education (whether formal, non-formal or informal) is a process of acquiring basic knowledge, skills, habits and values that enable individuals function effectively and become relevant in the society (Ogundele, Mugu & Yarwal 2015).

Ebong (2016) asserted that education does more than imparting knowledge and skills, it transforms the human being’s behavioural patterns. Thus, investment in education for human capital development continues to occupy the agenda of educational planners and policy makers. Through the acquisition of education, individuals are able to develop the

competencies and proficiency that is required to acquire empowerment opportunities and meet livelihoods opportunities in a better way (Kapur, 2019).

Kapur (2019) opined that the acquisition of education renders a significant contribution in the generation of income. An educated individual is able to develop his capacity to promote self-esteem. According to Awan, Malik, Sarwar & Wagas (2011) education and poverty are inversely related. The higher the level of education of the population, lesser will be the number of poor persons because education imparts knowledge and skills which is supportive in higher wages. The direct effect of education on poverty reduction is through increasing the earnings/income or wages. The direct effect of education on poverty is important with respect to 'human poverty' because as education improves the income, the fulfillment of basic necessities becomes easier and raises the living standard which surely means the fall in human poverty (Awan et al, 2011).

Awan et al posited that the linkages between education and poverty broadly can be seen in two ways: investment in education increases the skills and productivity of poor households. It enhances the income level as well as the overall standard of living (human development).

Through the acquisition of education, the individuals are able to generate awareness in a number of factors. They are able to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate actions and are able to make informed decisions.

To alleviate the conditions of poverty and to enrich one's living, it is essential for the individual to develop effective communication skills. Research has indicated that individuals, belonging to rural communities and those who are residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness usually possess an introvert nature and their communication skills are in backward state. Through the development of effective communication skills, the individuals are able to socialize and develop interaction with various organizations and agencies that would enable them to alleviate the conditions of poverty and sustain their living condition satisfactorily

Through the acquisition of education, the individuals are able to augment their knowledge and understanding in terms of various aspects. They are able to acknowledge

the areas in tenures of which they are interested in seeking employment opportunities. In other words, individuals are able to augment their competencies and aptitudes in a better way, so they are able to secure employment opportunities. In order to acquire employment opportunities, it is essential for the individuals to acquire at least the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Acquisition of employment opportunities is one of the major aspects in causing a reduction in the conditions of poverty.

Education provides the individuals with the skills to manage scarce resources effectively.

Financial Inclusion as an Attribute of Good Governance for Poverty Alleviation

Financial inclusion as a concept has been defined differently in each distinctive circumstance. The concept has gained momentum in recent times because of its obvious impact on poverty alleviation which is key to the economic growth of a country (Abimbola, Olokoyo, Babalola, & Farovk, 2018).

Mohan (2016) described financial inclusion as a situation where certain segment of the populace access who hitherto lacked access to the financial system are gradually integrated into it through the provision of low-cost, safe and fair financial products and services from mainstream providers.

Beck, Demirgüç – Kunt, & Levine (2014) noted that there is evidence that people who are financially included tend to be more productive, consume and invest more. Since financial inclusion has a great influence on economic and social impact, it has taken centre stage in the deliberations of policy makers in the efforts to alleviate poverty.

Nigeria currently has a population of over 200 million with about 60% of this within the adult population. However, the country only has 80 million total bank customers with only 25% of this confirmed on the bank verification system so far with strong indication that a reasonable number of the yet to be verified customers are duplications (CBN reports in Abimbola et al., 2018).

Okoye, Adetiloye, Erin & Modebe (2020) that the pursuit of financial inclusion strategies is very important in the fight against poverty. It increases access to avenues through

which they can save their funds. Such funds can then be channeled to investment activities thereby leading to improved standard of living, enhance free flow of funds, create more jobs and thereby reduce poverty.

THE PROBLEM

It is true that government at all levels (local government and federal) has attempted several times to curb poverty through the setting up of various specialized agencies and programmes. Unfortunately, the supposed poverty alleviation agencies have not been able to make considerable positive impact on the living standard of the citizens. Several factors have been suggested as the reason behind the phenomenon, which include, but not limited to, good governance. The question, therefore, is, in what way does good governance influence poverty alleviation? Finding an answer to this question becomes the problem of this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does control of corruption influence poverty alleviation in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State?
2. To what extent does improved access to education influence poverty alleviation in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State?
3. To what extent does financial inclusion as an attribute of good governance influence poverty alleviation in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 3,420 members of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in seven communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The sample comprised 1,026 members (631 males and 395 females) obtained through stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire titled: "Influence of Good Governance on Poverty Alleviation Questionnaire (IGGPAQ)"

was used for data collection. The reliability coefficient is 0.80. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and weighted mean.

RESULTS

Table 1: Influence of the Control of Corruption on Poverty Alleviation

S/ N	ITEM	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	TOTAL	MEAN	REMARKS
1.	Implementation of effective corruption regulatory policies significantly improves the ability of poor people to participate in and benefit from economic growth which leads to poverty alleviation.	513 (2052)	296 (888)	184 (368)	33 (33)	3,341	3.25	Accepted
2.	Building accountable institutions as a means of controlling corruption drastically reduces poverty in the society	510 (2040)	299 (897)	187 (374)	30 (30)	3,341	3.25	Accepted
3.	A one-point increase in the control of corruption index improves the income of the people	526 (2104)	304 (912)	182 (364)	14 (14)	3,394	3.31	Accepted
4.	Addressing corruption from all the dimensions of governance and programme execution reduces poverty of the people.	602 (2408)	398 (1194)	18 (36)	8 (8)	3,646	3.55	Accepted

Table 1 shows that the respondents accepted that Implementation of effective corruption regulatory policies significantly improves the ability of poor people to participate in and benefit from economic growth which leads to poverty alleviation; building accountable institutions as a means of controlling corruption drastically reduces poverty in the society; a one-point increase in the control of corruption index improves the income of the people and that addressing corruption from all the dimensions of governance and programme execution reduces poverty of the people. Each of these items has a mean that is greater than the criterion mean -2.50 (3.25, 3.25, 3.31 and 3.55 respectively).

Table 2: Influence of Improved Access to Education on Poverty alleviation

S / N	ITEM	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	TOTAL	MEAN	REMARKS
5.	Through improved access to education people develop competencies and proficiency that are required to acquire empowerment opportunities and meet livelihoods opportunities in a better way.	514 (2056)	297 (891)	190 (380)	25 (25)	3,352	3.26	Accepted
6.	Improved access to education increases the level of education of the people and reduces the number of poor persons as they are imparted knowledge and skills which are supportive in higher wages.	526 (2104)	304 (912)	182 (364)	14 (14)	3,394	3.31	Accepted
7.	Improved access to education increases the level of education of the people and reduces the number of poor persons as they are imparted knowledge and skills which are supportive in higher wages.	528 (2112)	322 (966)	154 (304)	22 (22)	3408	3.32	Accepted
8.	Through improved access to education individuals generate awareness to alleviate the conditions of poverty by increasing their house–hold income.	510 (2104)	290 (870)	184 (368)	42 (42)	3,384	3.29	Accepted

Table 2 shows the options that through improved access to education people develop competencies and proficiency that are required to acquire empowerment opportunities and meet livelihoods opportunities in a better way; Improved access to education increases the level of education of the people and reduces the number of poor persons as they are imparted knowledge and skills which are supportive in higher wages; Improved access to education increases the level of education of the people and reduces the number of poor persons as they are imparted knowledge and skills which are supportive in higher wages and that Through improved access to education individuals generate awareness to alleviate the conditions of poverty by increasing their house–hold income were accepted by the respondents. They all have means that are greater than the criterion mean -2.50. (3.26, 3.31, 3.32 and 3.29 respectively.)

Table 3: Influence of Financial Inclusion on poverty alleviation

S/ N	ITEM	VHE	HE	LE	VL E	TOTAL	MEAN	REMARKS
9.	Financial inclusion makes financial services available to the poor within the economic system that are not privileged to those services due to low income and inaccessibility in a timely and cost-effective manner.	638 (2552)	410 (1230)	18 (36)	4 (4)	3,822	3.73	Accepted
10.	When the poor are financially included, it increases their ability to create wealth which increases their living condition.	526 (2104)	300 (900)	186 (372)	14 (14)	3,390	3.31	Accepted
11.	The financial inclusion of poor people accelerates economic activities which enhances economic growth and poverty reduction.	512 (2048)	301 (903)	189 (378)	24 (24)	3,353	3.33	Accepted
12.	Financial inclusion increases access to avenues through which the poor save their funds which are channeled to investment activities that improves their standard of living.	514 (2056)	297 (891)	192 (384)	23 (23)	3,354	3.27	Accepted

Table 3 shows that the options indicating that financial inclusion make financial services available to the poor within the economic system that are not privileged to those services due to low income and inaccessibility in a timely and cost-effective manner; When the poor are financially included, it increases their ability to create wealth which increases their living condition; The financial inclusion of poor people accelerates economic activities which enhances economic growth and poverty reduction and that financial inclusion increases access to avenues through which the poor save their funds which are channeled to investment activities that improves their standard of living were accepted by the respondents. The items have means of 3.73, 3.31, 3.33 and 3.27 respectively which are greater than the criterion mean – 2.50.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Results of the study showed that the respondents were mainly the members of the community administration institutions. These people are usually regarded as opinion leaders of their various communities and as such as should be in the best position to understand and respond to the issues within the scope of this study.

The findings showed that the implementation of effective corruption regulatory policies significantly improves the ability of poor people to participate in and benefit from economic growth which leads to poverty alleviation; building accountable institutions as a means of controlling corruption drastically reduces poverty in the society. This discovery is in tandem with the assertion of Doumbia (2020) who opined that the combination of political, economic, and institutional features of good governance, especially the control of corruption and regulatory quality, improves the income of the poor and decreases poverty. Good governance, as embodied, for example, in the control of corruption and the design and implementation of effective regulatory policies, significantly improves the ability of the poor to participate in and benefit from economic growth. A one-point increase in the control of corruption index and regulatory quality improves the income of the poor.

The study also discovered that addressing corruption from all the dimensions of governance and programme execution reduces poverty of the people. In support of this finding, Olujimi and Bako (2018) posited that corruption is one of the factors responsible for the low impact of the past poverty alleviation projects; therefore, corruption must be addressed from all the different dimensions of governance and programme execution. Indrawati (2016) noted that anti-corruption must be paired with efforts to enable governments to govern openly and fairly, to provide services and security to their citizens, and create an environment that fosters jobs and economic growth.

The findings also showed that improved access to education influence poverty alleviation. Through improved access to education people develop competencies and proficiency that are required to acquire empowerment opportunities and meet livelihoods opportunities in a better way. This finding agrees with the view of Kapur (2019) that through the acquisition of education, individuals are able to develop the competencies and proficiency that is required to acquire empowerment opportunities and meet livelihood opportunities in a better way. Awan et al. (2011) affirmed that education and poverty are inversely related. The higher the level of education of the population, the lesser will be the number of poor persons because education imparts knowledge and skills which is supportive in higher wages.

The findings showed that financial inclusion influence poverty alleviation. It makes financial services available to the poor within the economic system. when the poor are financially included, it increases their ability to create wealth which increases their living condition; and financial inclusion of poor people accelerates economic activities which enhances economic growth and poverty reduction. Supporting the above findings, Okoye et al. (2020) stated that the pursuit of financial inclusion strategies is very important in the fight against poverty. It increases access to avenues through which they can save their funds. Such funds can then be channeled to investment activities thereby leading to improved standard of living, enhance free flow of funds, create more jobs and thereby reduce poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Rivers State government should embark on building of accountable institutions as a means of controlling corruption to drastically reduce poverty in the state.
2. The Ikwerre local government council should ensure the improved access to education in order to increase the level of education of the rural people and reduce the number of poor people in the communities.
3. Financial institutions operating in Rivers State should ensure the financial inclusion of the rural populace that are not privileged to financial services due to low income and inaccessibility.
4. Members of communities in Rivers State should establish community-based organizations in order to avail themselves of government empowerment programmes for the enhancement of poverty alleviation.

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