
TACKLING POVERTY AS A VARIABLE OF
CORRUPTION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This paper discussed the relationship between poverty and corruption in developing countries and how one can lead to the other. Materialism was also explained vis-à-vis corruption. The objective was to present the indices of corruption and poverty across the developing countries with a view to improve living standard and enhance sustainable development and these were presented in tables 1 and 3. Finally, attempt was made in measuring poverty across the developing countries of the world. Rather than using in come well being or ill-being” were used in measuring poverty across 74 developing countries using longevity/life expectancy, adult literacy level, access to basic nourishment and access to safe water. Based on these, recommendations were made so as to improve living standard by combating corruption and reducing poverty to the “relative level”. The paper concluded by calling on the concerned societies to organize themselves around moral principles of honesty, integrity and selfless service for on ward improvement in the standard of living and the process of development.

Key Words: *Poverty, Corruption, Developing Countries, Materialism.*

Introduction

Meanwhile, poverty can lead to corruption much as corruption can lead to poverty as well more especially in the developing countries for example, becoming corrupt in the third world countries is almost very easy because of poverty; most of the time, people struggle for survival without assistance from the state. Even the monthly meagre salary is not regular in some places thereby giving room for workers to make ends meet by compromising their duties to meet up with the exigencies of their daily obligation. In addition, the fear of not getting their gratuity and pension on time after retirement makes some public servants to engage in corruption in an attempt to amass wealth and keep in foreign bank accounts or acquire some property (Sadiq and Abdullahi, 2013).

On the other hand, corruption in turn can lead to poverty because state funds going into private pockets would pauperise and impoverish the state; for example in Nigeria, it was discovered by the national assembly in 2011 that the country paid subsidy on 59 million litres of petrol per day while the actual daily usage was 35 million litres (The Leadership, April 5, 2011 in Sadiq and Abdullahi, 2013). Similarly, the cases of fake award of contracts to emergency contractors to construct roads and buildings in which the roads latter became death-traps and buildings suddenly collapsing thereby claiming innocent lives on daily basis show how corruption is “fighting back” on the society.

Meanwhile, materialism: the ideology that places emphasis on the material rather than on the spiritual side of us (Eboh, 1994:15), it is materialism that stresses the material value and holds that “money makes a man” and that this life is for nothing but wealth and possession (money, food, drink, cars, houses and the ability to acquire whatsoever one wants). A typical materialist believes in “here and now” (his et num) consequently he pursues the acquisition of money through corrupt means. Consequent upon this, it has been rightly observed that the poor are so because they have been excluded from opportunities to earn decent income, enjoy health care facilities and access educational facilities; it is this exclusion that leads to a debilitating lifestyle that causes poverty (Iro-uke and Mutiallah, 2014). A radical resistance to break this vicious cycle of poverty

therefore can possibly make an average individual prone to corrupt and materialistic tendencies so as to gain self esteem in a capitalist economy. It is this link between poverty on one hand and corruption and materialism on the other that makes each of these concepts a viable enterprise all over the world.

Poverty, the condition of having insufficient resources or income. In its most extreme form, poverty is a lack of basic human needs, such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, housing clean water and health service. Extreme poverty can cause terrible suffering and death, and even modest levels of poverty can prevent people from realising many of their desires. The world's poorest people – many of whom live in developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe struggle daily for food, shelter and other necessities. They often suffer from severe malnutrition, epidemic diseases outbreaks, famine and war. In wealthier countries – such as the United States, Canada, Japan, and those in Western Europe – the effects of poverty may include poor nutrition, mental illness, drug dependence, crime and high rates of diseases (Corbett, 2008).

Extreme poverty, which threatens people's health or lives is also known as destitution or absolute poverty. In the United States, extreme poverty is traditionally defined as having an annual income that is less than half of the official poverty line (an income level determined by the Bureau of the census). Extreme poverty in developing nations as defined by international organizations, means having a household income of less than U.S \$ 1 per day. Relative poverty is the condition of having fewer resources or less income than others within a society or country, or compared to worldwide averages. In developed countries, relative poverty is often measured as having a family income less than one-half of the median income of that country.

However, most nations of the European Union define poverty as having significantly fewer resources than average, generally less than half of typical earnings or income. This definition bases the poverty figure on mean (average) or median (the middle) income. These types of measurements contrast with the U.S poverty line, which is derived from the value of basic consumption rather than

from average income. For example, the U.S poverty line for an individual amounted to only about 36 per cent of typical earnings in 1996 (Sen, 1997). Another measure of poverty defines it in terms of human capital – that is, a person's earning potential (generally related to work skills). From this perspective, people with relatively high earning potentials are not poor because they should be able to easily find work. People can increase their skill levels and earnings potentials in a variety of ways, such as by attending college, entering an apprenticeship programme or participating in an on-the-job or workplace – sponsored training programme. If the job market changes, new skills may become valuable and old one less in demand, as has happened with the introduction of computers to the work place.

While income and skills are used in measuring poverty other definitions of poverty is that people are poor if they believe they do not have enough resources. Studies have shown for instance that when people say they are poor, they tend to spend more on basic goods such as food, and less on discretionary items such as televisions or cars. Other subjective definitions of poverty focus on people's quality of life. Quality –of-life measures might include the opportunity to freely choose professions and lifestyles, the right to receive a full and free education, and freedom from political oppression. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2004). Annually publishes *The Human Development Report*, which ranks the degree of poverty in different countries using quality-of-life measures such as these.

Poverty has been a concern in societies even before the beginning of recorded history. According to sociologists and anthropologists, social stratification (the division of a society into a hierarchy of wealth, power and status) was a defining characteristics of the earliest civilizations. This rise of civilizations also led to stratifications among nations and territories around the globe. Powerful and wealthy nations maintained and increased their power and wealth and build empires by using the labour and resources of less powerful regions. through two colonial periods- that is the Trans-Atlantic slave trade from 15th to the early 19th century and from the early 19th century to the mid 20th century (Rodney 1971).

During the first period of slave trade, several western European countries led by Portugal, The Netherlands, Spain, France and Britain used the colonial territories to obtain slaves for trade. In the late 18th century, the Industrial Revolution brought mechanized production to many nations and ushered in a full period of colonialism. Industrialization began in Britain and soon spread to America, much of Western Europe and some Pacific nations, such as Japan. Industrialized countries and many of the people living in them experienced increases in wealth and ease of access to essential resources, including clothing, building materials and staple foods. The colonies in Africa, South and East Asia and what is now Latin America did not share in these gains. Often, the resource of the colonies was exploited by colonizing countries. In the colonies, the production of food and raw materials for manufacturing diverted indigenous peoples from doing subsistence works such as gardening or tending livestock. Others were simply displaced from their lands. Native Africans, Asians, and Americans who had been self-sufficient as farmers, pastoralists and hunters now became dependent on outsiders for their basic needs and many became poor.

The economies of the former colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America began to change only in the mid-20th century when they gained political independence. Most former colonies came to be known as developing countries or, collectively as the Third world. The Third World is home to the world's poorest people. The countries of Eastern Europe – which were formerly part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Communist blocks – and the Republic of China are sometimes referred to as the Second World. These countries have vast rural territories and legacy of state – owned property, facilities and equipment (as for farming) from years of communist rule. They have become industrialized but many still have high levels of poverty. The former colonizing countries, which have highly industrialized and post-industrial (service and information-based) economies, have become known generally as developed countries.

Objectives

The objective of this research are to:

1. Present the indices of both poverty and corruption across the developing countries of the world with a bid to improve living standard and enhance sustainable development.
2. Display a ranking order of selected developing countries on the basis of poverty

Poverty in Developing Countries

Many developing countries experience severe and widespread poverty which often leads to deficiency and epidemic diseases, starvation and deaths. In the past few decades, millions of people have starved and died as a result of famine in such countries as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, North Korea, Somalia and Sudan (Ravallion, 2004). As recently as 1998, almost one person in four (23 percent) residing in developing countries lived on less than \$ 1 a day.

Poverty disproportionately affects women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. In many developing nations, women have low social status, and are restricted in their access to both education and income-generating work. Without adequate income they commonly depend on men for support, but often get little. Asian countries such as China, India, Korea and Thailand have been widely accused of permitting or encouraging poor families to kill their family babies, a practice known as female infanticide. These countries are over populated, and their cultures promote the belief that men contribute more to economies and bring more wealth to their families than do women. People who do not work – such as young children, the elderly and many people with disabilities – depend on families and other support for basic necessities. However, neither poor families nor the governments of many developing countries can adequately support the non-working. Poor children in particular suffer the consequences. Children have underdeveloped immune systems and they easily acquire diseases in unsanitary living conditions. Thus, the poorest countries have high rates of child morbidity (diseases) and mortality (death). Children also have very low social status and often suffer from parental neglect and abuse because they are not considered important like women in many

developing countries; children may be exploited as prostitutes or as workers for little or no pay (Corbett, 2008)

Africa

This continent includes many of the poor countries in the world. In much of the African South of the Sahara, harsh environmental conditions aggravates the conditions of poverty. Dry and barren land covers large expanses of this region. As the poor try to eke out livings through farming and other subsistence practices, they exhaust the land, using up the soil nutrients needed to grow crops. This has led to desertification (a process in which once fertile land turns to deserts). During the late 20th century, desertification contributed to famines in a number of African countries including Somalia, Ethiopia and Mali. Political instability and wars in many sub-Saharan countries have also contributed to poverty. As a result of such factors, the number of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa grew from 217 million in 1987 to more than 300 million in 1998, (UNDP, 1998). In Nigeria, 33.1% still live below the poverty line in 2014. (WIKIPEDIA, NIGERIA 2014)

South and East Asia

In 1989 Asia (including South Asia, and the Pacific region) accounted for about two-thirds of the world's 1.2 billion poorest people. These people all lived on less than 1 \$ per day. South Asia – that is, the Indian sub-continent, which includes India, Nepal and Bangladesh had about 522 million people living in extreme poverty in 1996. India had the greatest number of poor of any country in the world; more than 300 million people, more than one-third of its population. The caste system associated with Hinduism, the dominant religion in India, helps to perpetuate some of this poverty. This system keeps many families poor from generation to generation by assigning certain groups of people to low status. Approximately 267 million people in East and South East Asia lived on less than \$ 1 per day in 1998. China has very large numbers of poor due to the great size of its rural population. South East Asian countries as Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia rank among the world's poorest.

Several wars have contributed to poverty in South and East Asia. The World War II (1939-1945) and the wars in Korea (1950-1953) damaged land, crops and forests; prevented many people from making a living; and killed and dislocated millions. In the late 20th century, governments and industries around these regions sponsored massive deforestation, mining, and damming projects that damaged or hindered access to forests, fields and water resources. Such projects also forced many people to abandon their homes and fields, making them more susceptible to poverty.

Latin America

In Latin America, (Central America, South America and the Caribbean), the poorest people are commonly Native American, people of African ancestry, and mestizos (persons of mixed Native American and European ancestry). People of European descent who live in Latin America generally have higher standards of living. Political instability has contributed to poverty in Latin America countries, including Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Panama. The countries have gone through long periods of military rule or dictatorship in which leaders have hoarded land and natural resources and impaired people's ability to make an adequate living. For many years, the Caribbean country of Haiti has suffered economically from the effects of both political upheaval and environmental degradation. Brazil has the greatest number of people living in poverty in all of Latin America, Corbeth (2008). This is in part because of its size, but also because of encroachment by urban populations on the land and forest resources of its many native people. Large-scale urban poverty, marked by crowded and unsanitary slums, plagues cities such as Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and Mexico city. It is estimated that slightly more than 60 million people in this region of the world lived in extreme poverty in 1998.

Table 1: Poverty index across the Developing Countries

1. Average number of the population suspected to die before the age of 40. i.e life expectancy.
2. Percentage of the citizens without access to basic nourishment. i.e. average consumption of protein per citizen per day.
3. Proportion of the illiterate adults in the nation i.e. adult literacy level.
4. Percentage of the unemployed citizens in the country.
5. Average number of people without access to health care services.
6. Average number of people without access to safe water.
7. Percentage of annual child mortality (death) and morbidity (diseases) in the country.
8. Average number of people engaging in agriculture in contrast to industrialization.
9. Average number of the population without access to ICT; radio, television, handset or other such information facilities.
10. Average ratio of medical doctors per citizens in a nation.
11. Average ratio of policeman per citizens in the country.
12. Average ratio of teachers per students per class.

Source: Field Survey, (2017).

Measuring Poverty

How people and institutions portray and try to cope with poverty depends to a considerable extent on how poverty is measured. The differences between relative poverty (having less than others) and absolute poverty (not having enough to survive) are great. However, there are a wide variety of options for measuring wealth and well-being and for establishing lines that separate the poor from the non poor.

While economists have traditionally chosen income as the basis for measuring and defining poverty, experts argue that no one measure is necessarily correct and therefore poverty should be measured in a plural fashion. In the light of this, the United Nations Development programme has provided certain options to globally measure poverty. This was called Human Poverty Index (HPI) based on average life expectancy or longevity; adult literacy level or

knowledge and decent standard of living which is sub-broken into (i) adequate nourishment (ii) and sanitation i.e access to safe water. Consequently, this has been reduced to four ordinal scales of:

- E – people not expected to survive beyond age 40.
- L – adult illiteracy rate (in %)
- M – under weight children (due to malnutrition) under age 5 (in %)
- S – proportion of population with Access to sanitation

In the international comparisons of poverty, the rankings are done in such a way that the country with most poverty ranks 1; and one with the least poverty ranks 74 and where two countries tie in terms of poverty they all have a rank order position like in the case of Togo and Nigeria who both scored 89 were both awarded 23 position

Table 2:Poverty Ranking in 74 Countries

Country	E	L	M	S	Borda Score	Borda Rank
Cuba	67	72	74	71	284	74
Costa Rica	73	71	73	65	282	73
Trinidad and Tobago	70	74	67	59	270	72
Columbia	66	66	66	66	264	71
Panama	67	65	67	63	262	70
Jamaica	72	58	60	69	259	69
Uruguay	70	73	67	43	253	68
United Arab Emirates	74	50	70	54	248	67
Mauritius	67	54	45	74	240	66
Jordan	60	60	62	54	236	64
Thailand	63	69	32	72	236	64
Libyan Arab Jamayriya	41	46	71	73	231	63
Dominican Republic	58	52	60	58	228	61
Mexico	64	62	51	51	228	61
Paraguay	60	67	72	23	222	60
Ecuador	59	63	44	53	219	59
Syrian Arab Republic	57	40	54	63	214	58
El Salvador	52	42	58	61	213	56
Tunisia	56	35	62	60	213	56
Honduras	54	44	43	68	209	56

Algeria	55	31	53	70	209	54
Peru	48	61	53	38	205	53
Mongolia	42	53	54	52	201	52
Iran	52	38	48	61	196	51
Philippines	49	70	21	54	194	50
Zimbabwe	39	59	45	47	190	49
Sri Lanka	65	64	9	44	182	48
Nicaragua	47	36	54	42	179	47
Iraq	44	29	54	49	176	46
Kenya	35	49	38	54	176	45
Bolivia	37	56	45	35	172	44
China	62	51	45	13	171	43
Botswana	43	39	50	35	167	42
Congo	36	45	35	48	164	41
Morocco	50	15	52	23	160	40
Indonesia	45	57	15	30	147	39
Tanzania	18	37	24	67	146	38
Egypt	40	22	62	21	145	37
Guatemala	48	26	28	41	141	36
Cameroon	27	33	51	29	140	35
Viet Nam	51	68	4	9	132	34
Zambia	11	48	26	45	130	33
Lesotho	31	41	41	16	129	32

Country	E	L	M	S	Borda Score	Borda Rank
Ghana	30	34	28	35	127	31
Uganda	6	32	36	45	119	30
Senegal	28	5	42	39	114	29
Myanmar	25	56	6	25	112	28
Cote d'Ivoire	32	12	35	25	104	27
Central African Republic	10	30	28	32	100	26
Namibia	32	14	32	22	100	25
Togo	21	21	35	12	89	25
Nigeria	12	25	13	39	89	23
Zaire	19	47	17	5	88	23
Bhutan	15	15	8	49	87	22
Papua New Guinea	20	43	15	9	87	21
Guinea - Bissau	3	24	38	19	84	19
India	38	23	2	18	81	18

Pakistan	34	10	9	27	80	18
Haiti	23	18	25	13	79	16
Mozambique	2	13	28	33	76	15
Sudan	29	19	17	9	74	14
Bangladesh	24	11	1	28	64	12
Mali	21	3	20	20	64	12
Lao	15	27	5	16	63	11
Yemen	25	15	8	13	61	9
Burundi	12	7	12	30	61	9
Malawi	7	27	21	2	57	8
Madagascar	16	20	17	1	54	7
Guinea	5	8	32	8	53	6
Niger	3	1	13	33	50	5
Cambodia	17	9	7	4	37	4
Burkina-Faso	8	2	21	6	37	3
Sierra Leone	1	4	24	3	32	2
Ethiopia	9	6	3	7	25	1

Source: United Nations Development Programme (1997)
 Notes: E: People Not Expected to Survive Beyond Age 40 (%), 1990
 L: Adult Illiteracy Rate (%), 1995
 M: Underweight Children Under Age 5 (%), 1990-96
 S: Proportion of the Population with Access to Sanitation (%), 1990-96
 Borda Score: E+ L+ M+ S
 Borda Rank: Ranking According to the Borda Rule

From table 2 above, the country with the highest rate of poverty was Cuba while the country with the lowest poverty rate was Ethiopia according to the UNDP ranking of 1997.

Corruption As a Concept

A universally accepted definition for corruption that will cover the whole facts of human behaviour may be elusive, however the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (2002) described corruption as; “the abuse of public office for private gains”. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts solicits or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal

benefits even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or diversion of state revenue". The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) Act 2000 cited by Onimode (2001), maintains that corruption includes bribery, fraud and other related offences. Otite (1982) described corruption as "the persuasion of integrity of state of affairs through bribery, favour, or moral depravity". He went on to state that corruption takes place "when at least two parties have interacted to change the structure or processes of society or the behaviour of functionaries in order to produce dishonest, unfaithful or defiled situation." According to Usman (2001), corruption means much more than public officers taking bribes and gratification, committing fraud and stealing funds and assets entrusted in their care. Corruption means the deliberate violations for gainful ends, of standards of conduct legally, professionally, or even ethically established in private and public affairs." These gains may be in cash or kind, or it may even be psychological or political, but they are made from the violation of the integrity of an entity and involve the subversion of its quality and capacity.

Table 3: Corruption Index across the Developing Countries

1. Subversion of the political process aimed at capturing power to determine the rules of economic and political engagement for pecuniary benefit.
2. Budget paddling impacting heavily on development prospects.
3. Pervasion of laid-down rules of due process for private monetary gains through wrongful inducements and illicit payments for rendering public service.
4. Diversion of state funds to private ventures for personal gains.
5. Collection of kickbacks and award of fake contracts to emergency contractors.
6. Award of salaries to ghost workers and pensioners.
7. Misappropriation of public funds, public books, publications, valuable security documents and accounts.

8. Sales of votes and hiring of thugs and assassins to eliminate political opponents.
9. Offer or collection of bribes and tips either in cash or in kinds to facilitate staff promotion.
10. Offer or collection of gratification to court officials, lecturers or school officials to influence dispensation of justice, high grades or admissions to tertiary institutions.
11. Sexual harassment of junior female workers or students' in offices and schools.
12. Nepotism and favouritism at the expense of meritocracy.

Source: Field Survey, (2017)

Conclusion

The topic: Tackling Poverty and Corruption in developing countries presupposes that both poverty and corruption are existent there-in, although the way and manner in which a country fights these twin – concepts makes the difference among nations. However, from the discussions above, it could be safely concluded that both poverty and corruption have impacted negatively to the process of development, constituted a stumbling block to the task of nation building and slowed down the rate of economic growth more especially in all developing countries across the globe. Including Nigeria whose one third of its population (33.1%) are poor. This is unacceptable to the African giant economy with massive wealth and a huge population to support agriculture, industrialization and commerce. It is a known fact that the prosperity of a country depends on the moral disposition of its people. Therefore, every concerned society must be organized around moral principles as its foundation. These include the principles of honesty, integrity and selfless services.

Recommendations

In order to credibly reduce the level of poverty and improve the standard of living across the developing countries world-wide, the following suggestions are hereby made:

- People in leadership positions should always make it a priority to pay the workers' salaries and pensioners' gratuities and

- pensions as at when due to reduce the tendency of public servants being involved in bribes, fraud and other corrupt practices as well as improving the lots of pensioners whose income are mostly stable.
- As all developed countries have extensive anti-poverty programmes; governments in developing countries should also endeavour to provide enough funds to keep many people out of poverty.
 - Many international organizations such as United Nations and World Bank should increase their efforts in alleviating poverty in both underdeveloped and developing countries to ensure that they do not end up in private pockets but to be judiciously used in improving the lifestyle of the citizens.
 - All other non-governmental organizations, (NGOs), government agencies and private Development Banks should all join hands with both central and state governments of their respective countries to assist the poor in the area of provision of pipe-born water, scholarship awards and provision of foods for the poor in their respective countries.

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