

# EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME AS AN IMPERATIVE STRATEGY FOR ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*The study examined social protection programme as an imperative for alleviating poverty in Nigeria between 2010 and 2021. Nigerian government adopted the national social protection policy among others to addresses poverty, unemployment, social and economic vulnerabilities, inequality, exclusion and other threats to sustainable development. The social protection policy is an umbrella policy framework that incorporates related social agenda paradigms intended to reduce poverty and provide a life of dignity for all citizens. Sadly, since the adoption of the policy in 2016 and a significant increase in social protection budget from N261.65 billion in 2010 to N1.26 trillion 2021, more Nigerians have been plunged into poverty and the number increases daily. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of government expenditure on social protection programmes in alleviating poverty using the method of unit root and descriptive statistic test to carry out the diagnostics analysis, and ordinary least square (OLS) method on annual data on government expenditure on social protection*

*programmes and per capita income (Poverty), which was generated from Federal Ministry of Finance and World Development Indicator. The finding revealed that government expenditure on social protection programme has positive and statistically insignificant relationship with per capita income (poverty) in Nigeria during the period under review. Therefore, the study concludes that there is need to transform the social protection programmes in terms of wider coverage without segregating its structures to brighten the prospects of the programmes in alleviating poverty. The study recommended that for social protection programmes to be considered plausible in alleviating poverty, the entire population, including formal and informal workers, should be protected from different risks along the life cycle such as chronic poverty, climate change, and insecurity among others. Furthermore, programme design and implementation should be suitable to meet the special needs of persons with different characteristics, circumstances, and vulnerabilities.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, Per Capita Income, Unemployment, Social Protection Program, Nigeria

## **INTRODUCTION**

Poverty is a global threat, plaguing both developed and developing nations. It has a devastating effect on developing nations generally but sub-Saharan Africa in particular (Addae-Korankye 2014). Poverty has become pervasive in Nigeria in the last four decades despite the economic boom of the 1970s (Anyanwu, 1997; Mohammed-Hashim, 2008; Obi, 2007). Despite being a richly endowed middle-income economy, Nigeria hosts more of the world's extreme poor today than any other country and has some of the poorest human capital outcomes in the world (World Bank, 2019). It can be argued that poverty varies from one subgroup to another such that poverty is seen in all its manifestations and its magnifications as antithetic to economic growth (Rodrigues, 2009). Globally, poverty has been recognised as a major blemish in developing economies ever since economists began to take interest in the third world (Killick, 1981). However, the international price of oil decreased or fell constantly and brought about worsening economic conditions; there was a sharp fall in the standard of living and the biting hand of poverty was ushered in as a leading problem in Nigeria (Okunmadewa, 1996).

The poverty situation in Nigeria is quite disturbing. Both the quantitative and qualitative measurements attest to the growing incidence and depth of poverty in the country (Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), 1999; Okunmadewa, Yusuf, & Omonona, 2005). This situation however presents a paradox considering the vast human and physical resources that the country is endowed with. It is even more disturbing that despite the huge human and material resources that have been devoted to poverty reduction by successive governments, no noticeable success has been achieved in this direction. Although, predicted poverty reduction scenarios vary greatly depending upon the rate and nature of

poverty related policies, actual evidence suggests that the depth and severity of poverty is still at its worst in Nigeria, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Hanmer & Nasehold, 2000; Barbier, 2000; Okunmadewa et al., 2005). Within these regions, poverty is largely a rural phenomenon with an average of between 62 and 75% of the population living on less than a dollar a day (Pinstrup-Anderson et al., 2001). Rural poverty also tends to be deeper than urban poverty in these regions (Bird, Hulme, D, Moore, & Shepherd, 2002; Apata Rahji, Samuel, & Igbalajobi 2009). Besides, it has become increasingly evident that within the African region the poor are heterogeneous and that some element of dynamics does exist with a clear distinction between chronic and transitory poverty (Barret, Bezuneh, Clay, & Reardon, 2000). Chronic poverty is considered the component of total poverty that is static and transitory poverty component that is attributable to the inter-temporal variability (Jalan and Ravallion, 1996). The isolation of the process underlying chronic and transitory poverty is considered essential in understanding the extent to which each poverty type may obscure the other or even distort the effects of government anti-poverty programmes.

In Nigeria, the nature of the determinants of poverty can be traced to low or declining level of economic growth, income inequalities, unemployment, corruption, bad governance, diversion of funds into non-developmental projects, fund embezzlement, inappropriate macroeconomic policies, inadequate endowment of human capital, debt or borrowing, labour market deficiencies that were caused by limited growth in job creation, low productivity, low wages in the informal sector and poor development of human resources. Poverty can also arise through structural deficiencies such as environmental degradation, worker retrenchment, frequent and increasing crime rates and violence, decrease in the real value of safety nets, structural changes in the family as well as the neglect of the

agricultural sector, non-development of infrastructural facilities, lack of enabling environment for infant industries, epileptic power supply, depreciation of the Nigerian currency (naira) and the military government's inability to properly manage the Nigerian economy (Ajakaiye & Adeyeye, 2001; & Ogwumike, 2001).

Poverty became prevalent in Nigeria beginning in 1985 and was seen as an obstacle or limitation to economic growth because poverty is measured based on the world standard of \$1 per day and \$2 per day. International prices were adjusted for local currency such that purchasing power parity conversion factors were employed to compute the depth of poverty as well as its prevalence in Nigeria (Obadan & Odusola, 2001). The Human Development Index for 2020 ranks Nigeria 153 of 186 countries and the frightening statistics about 112 million of over 200 million Nigerians live below poverty line. By the figure, it means 67% of entire population is finding it hard to live on bare existence. World Bank (2021) attributed inequality, in terms of income and lack of job opportunities as the core of the high poverty levels bedevilling the country. Other leading causes include corruption, mismanagement of national resources, deficit governance, high-level inflation, climate change, and in recent times Covid-19 pandemic that was accompanied with massive loss of jobs and other sources of livelihood. It reflects a current state of deprivation, of lacking the resources or capabilities to satisfy current needs. The main problem lies in the fact that despite the high incidence rates in Nigeria little is documented on policy related determinants of rural poverty, making it very difficult to effectively set and implement sustainable anti-poverty policy programmes. In 2016, Nigerian government adopted the National Social Protection Policy among others to addresses poverty, unemployment, social and economic vulnerabilities, inequality, exclusion and other threats to sustainable development. The Social Protection Policy is an umbrella policy

framework that incorporates related social agenda paradigms intended to reduce poverty and provide a life of dignity for all citizens. Sadly, since the adoption of the policy in 2016 and a significant increase in social protection budget from N261.65 billion in 2010 to N1.26 trillion 2021, more Nigerians have been plunged into poverty and the number increases daily. Thus, it is expedient to review the impact of social protection interventions on poverty alleviation. This is important, as it will help us to interrogate increasing level of poverty and vulnerability in the country despite all the resources invested to in the social protection programme. The objective of this study is therefore to empirically analyse the impact of social protection programmes on alleviating poverty in Nigeria during the 2010 to 2021 period.

### **Overview of Social Protection Programmes in Nigeria**

Social protection agenda in Nigeria is largely public sector driven and in its nascent stages and emerging in terms of policies and implementation framework. The scheme provides a framework for promoting social justice, equity and inclusive growth and is also a transformative tool for addressing poverty, unemployment, social and economic vulnerabilities, inequality and exclusion and other threats to sustainable development (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning, 2021). Although in its nascent stage, President Muhammadu Buhari's administration that came into power in May 2015 institutionalized social protection interventions as its main policy thrust to stem the tide of the multi-dimensional poverty bedevilling the country through the establishment of the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) in 2016 and making social protection interventions a core arm of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development (Onyeonru, 2018). The Social Protection Policy for Nigeria (NSPP) is an umbrella policy framework that incorporates related social agenda paradigms intended to

reduce poverty and provide a life of dignity for all citizens while the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development was established to cushion the hardship suffered by Nigerians resulting from prevailing worrisome humanitarian situations and social challenges in the country.

Owing to widespread poverty, a large percentage of the population in Nigeria are in need of social assistance to relief the effects of poverty and vulnerability. However, due to financial constraint and other challenges that include high fragmentation, narrow fiscal space, lack of clearly defined roles for participating stakeholders, and narrow focus in terms of risks and targeted groups only a few of the poor get to benefit from the interventions (World Bank, 2019). In many instances, the programmes are also truncated by ambiguity of goals, poor database, lack of synergy and weak coordination between implementing agencies, corruption, political and other interferences that minimize the impact of the schemes.

Social protection interventions, which are implemented through; cash and food transfers, school subsidies and feeding programmes, subsidized health services, skills acquisition, job creation and support for persons living with disabilities among others are aimed at improving the economic and general productivity of poor and vulnerable persons in the society. In addition, the programmes are expected to pave way for sustainable development, inclusive governance and a peaceful and equitable society. Currently, there are four operational federal government social intervention programmes in Nigeria which include; N-Power which is targeted at empowering youth of 18-35 years; Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) which is targeted at people within the lowest poverty bracket in the country; the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) which provides loans of 10,000-100,000 Naira to small and medium enterprises; and the Home Grown School Feeding Programme which

provides feeding for young children (up till primary 3) in a bid to promote basic education (National Social Investment Programme – The Statehouse, Abuja).Some states and development partners also implement social intervention at to help the poor and vulnerable in the society.

However, despite the huge resources invested in the scheme and years of implementation, many of the social protection interventions have either minimal or unknown effect on poverty as vast majority of the citizens still live below poverty line and many more are susceptible to fall into extreme poverty due to high level of unemployment, corruption, violent conflicts, displacement and other harsh socio-economic conditions.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The following concepts are reviewed to provide an appreciation of the evolution of the concepts and application in various works and subsequently their current use in this work. These concepts are reviewed herewith.

### **Concept of Social Protection**

Broadly, social protection programmes are interventions implemented by either government, development partners and in some instances private individuals to alleviate the plight of the poor, reduce vulnerability and help them mitigate economic shocks. In Nigeria, the interventions are largely driven by the government and in recent times have become major policy thrust for reducing vulnerability. The term social protection has been defined in diverse ways by different scholars, based on the context of their work and experiences. A unifying factor in all the definitions is the acknowledgment that social protection seeks to reduce economic shocks and vulnerability of the poor in the society.

Ministry of Budget and National Planning (2016) defined the term social protection as “A mix of policies and programmes designed for individuals and households throughout the life cycle to prevent and reduce poverty and socio-economic shocks by promoting and enhancing livelihoods and a life of

dignity”. Similarly, Safe the Children International (2015) conceptualize social protection as “a set of public policies, programmes and systems that help poor and vulnerable individuals and households to; reduce their economic and social vulnerabilities, improve their ability to cope with risks and shocks and enhance their human rights and social status”. Therefore this study define social protection as a remedy for alleviating poverty by creating sustainable employment to the most vulnerable individuals and household to improve their livelihoods and reduce overdependence on government interventions.

### **Concept of Poverty**

The World Bank (2000) and Addae-Korankye (2014) define poverty as pronounced deprivation in well-being, such that an individual does not have access to basic resources required for him or her, and it consists of several dimensions, including low income and the inability to possess basic goods and services required for survival with self-esteem. Additionally, it also encompasses lack of adequate education, poor state of health, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, loss of physical security, lack of voice, insufficient capacity and lack of opportunity to better one’s own life. According to Aku, Ibrahim and Bulus (1997), poverty relates to physical deprivation in terms of health, nutrition, literacy and education, disability and lack of self-confidence. Economic deprivation is the lack of access to property, income, assets, factors of production and finance, while social deprivation is the denial of socio-political and economic participation. Cultural deprivation is the lack of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and attitudes, which deprives people of the opportunity to control their own destinies; political deprivation is the inability to lend one’s view in the political decision-making process.

The first dimension shows that individuals with physical deprivation are deprived from been able to have a formal education, unable to express themselves in public or participate in social, economic or political activities. This is mostly experienced in the northern states of Nigeria; the rest of the dimensions are mostly experienced in the rural areas and some in urban areas. Rural areas are denied of access to finance, factors of production, information, knowledge and so on, while the urban population does not have the necessary facilities needed to carry out their roles because of overcrowding; the poor live in slums and individuals are denied of property, income assets and so on. This definition of Aku was chosen as the bedrock of this article because it is multidimensional in nature.

Poverty can be classified as absolute or relative poverty. Absolute poverty is the number of people whose earnings fall below the \$1.25 per day that is the internationally established poverty line (World Bank, 2005; 2011). Anybody living on less than \$1 per day is assumed to be poor. This is a set standard that is said to be consistent among countries over time. Conversely, relative poverty refers to the situation where people cannot meet the basic minimum income required for guaranteed maintenance of the average standard of living recognised by the community where they live. It is relative because individual members of the community differ across countries, while the set standard changes over time depending on the economic trend at a particular point in time. It is a living standard that is defined in accordance with other people’s position in the distribution of income or expenditure (Todaro & Smith, 2011).

Poverty is generally perceived as lack of money or inability of an individual or a group of people to afford certain things needed to live a comfortable and decent life. This however is a narrow definition as poverty is deeper than lacking money or the basic necessities of life. World Bank (2009) elucidate that poverty arises when people

lack key capabilities, and so have inadequate income or education, or poor health, or insecurity, or low self-confidence, or a sense of powerlessness, or the absence of rights such as freedom of speech. From the above explanation, poverty can be said to be multi-dimensional and not limited to lack of money. For the purpose of this work, World Bank’s definition of poverty “as pronounced deprivation in wellbeing” is adapted. From the definition, well-being refers to the command over commodities in general, since people are seen to be better off if they have a greater command over resources. Consequently, poverty is measured on whether households or individuals have enough resources to meet their needs. If the resources they command are unable to meet these needs, then they are considered to be poor (Haughton & Khandker, 2009).

**METHODOLOGY**

Materials and information were obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report and statement of Account, CBN Financial review, The World Fact Book, Books and Annual Reports Ministry of finance and relevant journals. The method that was used in analyzing the data is Ordinary least square method because it has the advantages of Best Linear Unbiased Estimator and it is suitable in this study. The social protection programmes is the total expenditure on social protection programmes (X), while the poverty proxy by per capita income (PCI) is variable (y).

The a prior expectations are expected to be positive, we state thus

$$b_0, b_1, >0$$

This study covers a period of 12 years (2010 to 2021) given the fact that the period captured the major interventions of social protection programmes in Nigeria. The model captures government expenditure on social protection programmes, on alleviating poverty in Nigeria. The data used for this study are secondary in nature. The major sources of data for the analysis are the World Development Indicators, Central

Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

**Variables**

Dependent variable: poverty proxy by per capita income (PCI) Independent variable: Government expenditure on social protection programmes (SPP) and  $\epsilon$  = Error term

**Estimation Procedure and Method of Data Analysis**

Time series data for the period from 2010 to 2021 was used to develop an ordinary least squares (OLS) model for both the SPP and PCI dependent variables using E-views 12 econometrics analysis software. The use of time series data enables the use of many observations which results in a larger representative sample. Here also, Forecast is possible through historical numerical data using time series.

**Empirical results**

Essentially, this study covers the following variables namely: the Per Capita Income (PCI), and Government Expenditure on Social protection programmes (SPP).

**Descriptive Statistics**

The descriptive statistics provide the basic statistical features of the data under consideration including the mean, the minimum and maximum values, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and the Jarque-Bera test for the data. The table below provides the descriptive statistics, which also implies the historical background for the behaviour of the data.

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of the Data**

	PCI	SPP
Mean	2387.565	0.522500
Median	2255.148	0.425000
Maximum	3098.986	1.140000
Minimum	1911.608	0.220000
Std. Dev.	398.3631	0.321195
Skewness	0.522814	1.091231
Kurtosis	1.947137	2.848791
Jarque-Bera	1.100930	2.393001
Probability	0.576682	0.302250

Sum	28650.78	6.270000
Sum Sq. Dev.	1745625.	1.134825
Observations	12	12

**Source: Authors' Computation 2022, using E-view 12.0 version**

From table 1, there seems to be evidence of significant variations as shown by the huge difference between the minimum and maximum values for the variables under consideration. High standard deviation depicts a high degree of volatility in the variables during the period under investigation. The descriptive result reveals

that per capita income was highly volatile as the maximum rate was 3098.986 while the minimum was 1911.608 this variability is considerably high. However, the government expenditures on social protection programmes peak were 1.140000. All the distributions are positively skewed during the study period. Kurtosis less than three are called platykurtic (fat or short-tailed), SPP, and PCI variables qualified for this. On the other hand, variable whose kurtosis value is greater than three are called leptokurtic (slim or long tailed). Based on the probability of Jarque-Bera, PCI, and SPP are normal distribution

### Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) Test

**Table 2: Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) Test Results**

Series	ADF Test Statistics	1% Critical Value	5% Critical Value	10% Critical Value	Prob	Order of Cointegration
PCI	-6.400311	-4.004425	-3.098896	-2.690439	0.0002	I(1)
SPP	-4.457610	-3.831511	-3.029970	-2.655194	0.0027	I(1)

**Source: Author's Computation 2022, using E-view 12.0 version**

The results of unit root test shown on table 2 revealed that all the value of ADF test statistics for variables are negative. They are respectively greater than their critical values at 1%, 5% and 10%, implying that the variables are stationary at 1%, 5%, and 10%. They are also integrated (at first difference) of order 1, that is, I(1).

### Regression Results of Ordinary Least Square

**Table 3: OLS Regression Results**

Dependent Variable: PCI				
Method: Least Squares				
Sample: 2010 2021				
Included observations: 12				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
SPP	3320.826	665.7992	4.987729	0.6324
R-squared	41.321271	Mean dependent var		2387.565
Adjusted R-squared	41.321271	S.D. dependent var		398.3631
S.E. of regression	1398.321	Akaike info criterion		17.40359
Sum squared resid	21508316	Schwarz criterion		17.44400
Log likelihood	-103.4215	Hannan-Quinn criter.		17.38863

Durbin-Watson stat	1.227376			
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Source: Author's Computation 2022, using E-view 12.0 version

### Discussion of Findings

The results on table 3 reveal that Social protection programmes is positive because the coefficient of Social protection programmes (SPP) is positive (3320.826), indicating positive relationship between Social protection programmes (SPP) and Per capita income in Nigeria, and this is in line with a priori expectation. The coefficient of Social protection programmes (SPP) is statistically insignificant since its p-value (0.6324) is greater than (0.05) level of significance. Thus, we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that Social protection programmes (SPP) has positive and insignificant impact on Per capita income in Nigeria during the period under study. The finding implies an inverse relationship between Social protection programmes (SPP) and Per capita income (PCI). This means that Social protection programmes (SPP) is not significant in determining Per capita income (Poverty) in Nigeria.

The value of coefficient of multiple determination (R-square = 41.321271) shows that the variability in the explanatory variable (SPP) account for 41.32 percent of the variability in PCI. This suggests that the model is of good fit. The value of Durbin-Watson stat (1.227376) indicates absence of spurious results prevalence in autocorrelation in time series data used for the study.

### Conclusion

The significance of social protection programmes on alleviating poverty in Nigeria has been increasingly acknowledged in both academia and policy circles. In attempt to empirically examine the impact of social protection programmes on alleviating poverty using total government expenditure on social protection programmes and its overall effects on alleviating poverty in Nigeria. The results indicated that there is nexus between social protection programmes and poverty in Nigeria, which

influence positively and insignificantly on alleviating poverty In conclusion, there is need to transform the social protection programmes in terms of wider coverage without segregating its structures to brighten the prospects of the programmes in alleviating poverty.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study the following recommendations are put forward:

- i. Based on the findings from the study the appropriate strategy for social protection programme to contribute in alleviating poverty in Nigeria. There is need for creating sustainable jobs such as skills acquisitions programmes, inclusivity of both the persons living with disability, vulnerable and the non-vulnerable people due to the high level of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.
- ii. For social protection programmes to be considered plausible in alleviating poverty, the entire population, including formal and informal workers, should be protected from different risks along the life cycle such as chronic poverty, climate change, and insecurity among others. Furthermore, programme design and implementation should be suitable to meet the special needs of persons with different characteristics, circumstances, and vulnerabilities.
- iii. Social protection programmes should be part of short and long-term responses to security, food and nutrition, access to primary healthcare services and socio-economic status of the people with adequate funding for more

coverage to alleviate poverty in Nigeria.

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