

POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROCESS AND EMPLOYEE'S WELL-BEING IN A DEMOCRATIZED NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is located between latitude 8.50N of the equator and longitude 6. 30E of the Greenwich Meridian. It has land areas of 923,768 km and population of about 120 million people. The economy can be divided into two; the public and private sector, the government, through the public and private sector, is the single major employer of labour. These employees are referred to generally as civil servants. This is a feature of developing economic. The government sector looms large in the economy. A slump in the activities of this sector leads to a lot of sufferings in terms of decreases in demand for goods and services and increase in unemployment.

The country has been under military rule for 33 out of the 41 years of its independence. The current democratic dispensation was ushered in 1999. Before, the advent of democracy, the poverty assessment (PA) study show that 87 percent in 1985 and 67 percent in 1992, of the core poor reside in the rural areas (Canagarajah et al, 1995) According to the World Bank (1997) Urban poverty also exist and is becoming an increasing concern as reflected in the worsening trend in urban welfare indicators.

To understand the employees and the level of their well being, one has to know and not only understand their output in the economy and the value attached to it socially, politically and economically.

The major output of civil servants are general services for which there are no ready markets and prices. It is the absence of price tags which mark, these services, out from market activities. It is difficult to value the benefit from that service, and they are not easy to quantify. Consumers of such service are mostly unwilling to receive their preference or willingness to pay. Hence, as far as public service is concerned, what is provided for one is provided for all. This makes it extremely difficult to determine the wages and salaries of civil servants.

The workers production function is not quantifiable or has not been estimated. Hence, their marginal productivity which in conjunction with the prices for their output to determines their wages are not known. The assumed production function is thus like a circle whose centre is everywhere.

The concept, on theoretical basis of paying labour, the value of its marginal productivity, as wages/salaries can thus not be implemented. So what determine the wages that are paid to these workers? How realistic are these wages in sustaining them? What relationship exists between this and their level of poverty? How does this affect their well – being and/or standard of living? What have been the lots of employee since the introduction of democracy in Nigeria?

Poverty alleviation process in relation to employees well–being as the main theme of this paper require a little elaboration.

Poverty, whether absolute, abject or relative, affects the well – being of the people. The concept of Poverty of course does not lend itself to an easy and precise definition. Any analytical exploration of the concept and definition is fraught with a number of difficulties. This is because Poverty affects many aspects of the human condition including physical, moral and psychological, that a concise and universally accepted definition is elusive (Black wood and Lynch, 1994). In spite of the difficulties, Poverty is here defined in terms of inadequacy of income or disposable resources to support a minimum standard of decent living. Ravallion (1992) maintains that although poverty is a many faceted concept, its characteristic of poor nutritional status, lack of physical assets and inability to work are sufficiently well correlated with income and consumption expenditure to allow us focus on these two variables. The choice of income as indicator of poverty is also based on the grounds that greater potential consumption implies greater utility and greater welfare, or that income determine what one get with it, hence for the capability a person has. Laderchi (1997) Therefore, adequate disposable income, low inflation rate and or consumer price index resulting in a high purchasing power are the major determinant of access to all other basic needs of life for meaningful existence. Indicators such as level of illiteracy, access to education, safe water delivery system, health services and housing environment if in adequate are also used to measure poverty (Rasheed, 1996).

Poverty Alleviation

Who is to reduce, eliminate or alleviate the poverty of the targeted group(s)? Is it the government, NGOS, donor agencies, private sector, World Bank and other bilateral organisations? The government, obviously is expected to play the most important role. Essentially, therefore, it entails government intervention in the distribution of resources in the economy.

On the basis of the foregoing, poverty alleviation is conceptualised in terms of

- The exploitation of the capacity and potentials of self-employment as against white-collar job syndrome.
- The provision of social services for the poor so as to reduce their welfare poverty.

Nigeria since independence has not experienced economic growth. Corruption of the successive ruling elite makes the fruit of growth to be unevenly distributed. The poverty being experienced in Nigeria has been attributed to distributive crisis in income and other productive resources. It is thus argued that the fastest and direct way to improve the lot of the poor is by income redistribution and other resources. It is the belief of this school of thought that Nigeria is a wonderfully rich country where unfortunately the people are suffering under the burden of poverty.

Wages and salaries increases were designed to alleviate poverty among the employees. Usually, the Federal Government enacts these and they are transmitted to the states and the private sectors. But often, the results of such salary increases are like taking two steps forward and ten steps backwards. The employees at the end of the day are always worse off than they were. The increases in price of essential commodities often make nonsense of such salary adjustments.

The general price level often increased many time the increases in nominal wages. The net effect is a downward spiral in the real income of employees and a reduction in their standard of living.

APPROACHES TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Three poverty alleviation processes and /or approaches have been tried in Nigeria. These are: -

- The economic growth approach, which hinges on the premise that economic deprivation, is the major cause of poverty. There is real economic growth, if there are consecutive increases in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and /or national income for 5 consecutive years. Once this is attained then poverty will be reduced. Nigeria has not achieved real economic growth since independence.
- The basic needs approach, which targets the provision of basic service and good such as food, water, shelter, health, education and other infrastructure facilities for the people. Most Nigerian lack basic needs and infrastructure are grossly inadequate to enable them live a meaningful life.
- The rural development approach, which focuses on the rural economy. This is based on the belief that rural poverty is a much wider issue than urban poverty. All government programmes to improve the rural poverty has not been effective.

The World Bank (1997) reported that the number of rural poor is about twice that of the urban and that the depth of poverty is more than double in rural areas. The continue neglect of rural areas often make the core poor to move to urban area only to increase urban unemployment poverty and problems. The well being of the few of the core poor that are fortunate to get employment, mostly at the lowest cadre in the cities has not improved substantially. It is always like moving from fry pan to fire. The living condition of most employees in the urban area is still pitifully low.

EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING BEFORE AND DURING DEMOCRACY: AN EXPOSITION.

The economic crises experienced by most developing counties like Nigeria in the 1980s brought the civil service compensation under the search light (Chew, 1990). The introduction of SAP in 1986 and the contraction in the economy that followed caused massive job losses and sharp increases in the poverty levels of civil servants. The high level of inflations following devaluation of the naira did not help issue: Between 1986 and 1992, salaries were kept constant. With the erosion in the value of the naira, real salary levels quickly declined (Briggs, 1991, Jamal, 1993, Maxwell, 1995). Virtually all classes of urban dwellers experienced drastic rates of decline in their standard of living (Bryceson, 1996). The civil servants were thus faced by economic distress defined as comprising lower levels of consumption of both private and public goods (Bigsten and Kayizzi - Mugerwa, 1992). The political elite on the other hand engages in criminal luxury and ostentatious living, while the workers are left to wallow in penury and abject poverty.

Successive military government concentrated on rural poverty, and urban poverty was almost neglected. But in a democracy political consciousness and political volatility of the majority poor urban constituencies often make them to attract government attention. The federal government in the year 2000 set up programmes such as Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) and in the year 2001 it was replaced by National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) to solve urban unemployment. Increase in salary is also employed to lessen urban poverty, as most of the government employees live in urban areas. A new minimum wage of bill of N7,500 was passed by the legislature and signed into law by the President in the year 2000. Each state government fixed its own minimum wage ranging from 5,200. Few state government paid 7,500 to its employees. However most of the government programmes and increases in salary has not really reduced poverty or improve employee well-being.

Since 1999 Federal and state Government engaged in building houses for workers. Apart from the fact that the percentage of house is less than 5% of the workers in all states, the prices are beyond what the middle and low-income workers can afford. Only few workers who get money and necessary 'connection' can get or purchase these houses. In Kebbi, a state at the extreme

northwestern part of Nigeria, five Hundred housing units were built between 1999 and 2002. Each unit of three-bedroom bungalow, which according to the state government was built at the cost price of three million naira each. Only few top civil servants can purchase this house and pay for it in their lifetime.

The Nigeria modern capital of Abuja where majority of the Federal civil servant work, grow with less consideration for the middle and low income workers in the provision of housing. These categories of workers cannot afford accommodation in the metropolis where they work mostly as public servant. Housing units that were originally set aside for middle and low-income workers in the metropolis have been taken over by the rich and the propertied class. The target of the urban development improvement initiative in Abuja, Lagos and some other major Nigerian cities were always directed at the middle and low-income workers who lives in surrounding slums and shantytowns. They are often accused of causing over crowding, living in unsanitary condition and for providing haven for criminals. In most of these places there are no government hospitals, water, motorable roads and other facilities. The only government presence in this ghettoised areas are police stations, for the poor were thought to be habitually prone to violence, disorderly behaviour, Immorality and crime.

The Health delivery system and educational facilities in Nigeria cities are better than those of the rural areas. However, the fees charged by good hospitals and schools are beyond what the middle and low-income workers can afford. The poor employees are forced to use poor school and hospitals. The result is poor education for their children and poor health for them and their dependants.

WAGE DETERMINATION: GOVERNMENT AS THE EMPLOYER

The employer determines the wage of an employee it supposed to give to each factors of production its dues (Measure product) wages, as the employer administers price of Labour, which is the Government in this case. Since wage is a price of Labour it should be determined by optimal allocation of resources and the market forces. In practice decision on wages or employee compensation is based on the ongoing wages, employers ability to pay, and grant fiat In a developed economy, emphasis is often placed on employee productivity or contribution to overall production process and sometimes the on going wages in the same industry In subsistence economy emphasis is placed on the welfare of the employee which has direct relationship with cost of living in the nation and employee purchasing power.

INCOME POLICY AND EMPLOYEES STANDARD OF LIVING.

In Nigeria which is a developing country employee welfare does not depend on how much income he receives based on his contribution but more importantly on the amount of goods and services he can buy with it. This translates into poverty, if it is below a given standard. The income of workers are often put in place and fixed. Imposition of wage restraints at the same time prices of food stuff, house rents, petroleum, drugs and others are increasing, has reduced the pay packet of Nigeria workers, and poverty intensified among them.

Income policy are inequitable and unjustified because wages are fixed arbitrarily and in most case, very low without any consideration for workers contribution or their well being.

Empirical Result and Discussion

The nominal basic salaries for civil servant in Oyo state, from 1991 to 1999 are presented in table 1. It indicates that salaries were increased three times during the Jan. 1993, 1997 and 1999. Despite the apparent increases over the years, the nominal basic salaries remain pitifully inadequate and low in real terms.

Table: 1. Nominal Basic Monthly Salary of Civil Servants in Oyo State, Nigeria. (Naira).

Level	January								
	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
01	250	250	363	363	363	363	377	377	1300
02	255	255	370	370	370	370	392	392	1352
03	262	262	380	380	380	380	464	464	1397
04	292	292	424	424	424	424	589	589	1467
05	331	331	480	480	480	480	754	754	1672
06	403	403	585	585	585	585	943	943	2055
07	440	440	729	729	729	729	1131	1131	2756
08	490	490	1052	1052	1052	1052	1320	1320	3619
09	511	511	1214	1214	1214	1214	1508	1508	4266
10	524	524	1486	1486	1486	1486	1724	1724	5022
12	670	670	1618	1618	1618	1618	2070	2070	5904
13	726	726	1821	1821	1821	1821	2286	2286	6601
14	821	821	2023	2023	2023	2023	2501	2501	7301
15	921	921	2225	2225	2225	2225	2786	2789	8164
16	1030	1030	2426	2426	2426	2426	3087	3087	9030

Source: Oyo State Secretariat, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1999

Table 2 shows that in 1993, the increases with 1991 ranged from 45 percent to 174 percent, about 51 percent to 229 percent in 1997 and in 1999 from 402 percent to 858 percent. In all these years, level 10 workers recorded the highest percentage change.

Table: 2 Percentage Change in Nominal Basic Monthly Salary with 1991 as Base Year

Level	1991&1993	1991&1997	1991&1999	1998&1999
01	45.2	50.8	420.0	244.8
02	45.1	53.7	430.2	244.9
03	45.0	77.1	433.2	201.1
04	45.2	101.7	402.4	149.1
05	45.0	127.8	405.1	121.8
06	45.2	134.0	409.9	117.9
07	65.7	157.1	526.4	143.7
08	114.7	169.4	638.6	174.2
09	137.6	195.1	734.8	182.9
10	174.1	229.0	858.4	191.3
12	141.5	2.9.0	781.2	185.2
13	150.8	214.9	809.2	188.8
14	146.4	204.6	789.3	191.9
15	141.6	202.5	789.4	193.0
16	135.5	199.7	776.7	196.5

Source: Computed from Table 1 Oyo Secretariat, Nigeria, 1999.

* Indicates the last increase as compared with the salary levels in 1998.

To capture the effect of these increase on the standard of living o the workers, the nominal salaries are deflated by the urban consumer price index (CPI) for their respective years. The resulting real basic salary of 1991.The CPI was used because it is believed that it captures the basic needs of the workers. It also measures the average changes in the level of retail prices of goods and services consumed by urban households in the country.

Table 3 contains the CPI values. The values for 1998 and 1999 were projected at 10 percent annual increment with 1991 as the base year, the CPI has continuously and rapidly increased that by 1999 it stood at 1067.4 percent with 1985 as the base year the CPI increased from 345.7 percent in 1991 to 3690 percent in 1999.

Table 3: Consumer Price Index (CPI) Nigeria 1991 –1999

Year	Base 1985 –100	1991-100
1991	345.7	100.0
1992	514.7	148.9
1993	830.1	240.1
1994	1317.1	381.0
1995	2134.9	617.6
1996	2802.1	810.6
1997	3049.5	882.1
1998	3354.5	970.4
1999	3690.0	1067.4

Source: CBN Statistical Bulletin Volume 8, No 2, December 1997

* Projected at 10% annual growth rate.

Table 4 shows that the real starting salaries fell drastically during the period 1991 to 1998. With the 1999 increase, the real basic salary levels or index ranged between 47.1 and 9.8 percent. The salary increases of 1993 failed to reach the 1992 levels for those on level 01 to 06. Those on level 07 –09 managed to surpass their 1992 levels. However, those on levels 10 to 15 were able to reach levels slightly greater than those of 1991, while their counterparts on level 16 failed to do so. In addition, the real values steadily decreased from a range of 59 to 114 percent in 1993 to a range of 18.0 to 34.0 percent in 1996. There is nothing to write home about in the salary increases of 1997. The values pitifully ranged between 17.1 to 37.3 percent and by 1998 decreased to between 15.5 to 33.9 percent of the 1991 values.

Table 4: Index of Real Basic Monthly Salary of Civil Servant in Oyo State, Nigeria

Level	January								
	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
01	100	68.0	60.0	39.0	24.0	20.0	17.1	15.5	48.7
02	100	66.7	58.8	38.0	23.5	18.0	17.3	15.8	49.7
03	100	67.2	60.3	38.1	23.5	17.9	20.1	18.3	50.0
04	100	67.2	60.5	38.1	23.5	17.9	22.9	20.8	47.1
05	100	67.2	60.4	38.1	23.5	17.9	25.8	23.5	47.3
06	100	67.2	60.5	38.1	23.5	17.9	26.5	24.1	47.8
07	100	67.2	69.0	43.5	26.8	20.4	29.1	26.5	58.7
08	100	67.0	89.4	56.4	34.8	26.5	30.5	27.8	69.2
09	100	67.2	99.0	62.4	38.5	29.3	33.5	30.4	78.2
10	100	67.2	114.1	71.9	44.4	33.8	37.3	33.9	89.8
12	100	67.2	100.6	63.4	39.1	29.8	35.0	31.8	82.6
13	100	67.2	104.5	65.8	40.6	30.9	35.7	32.5	85.2
14	100	67.2	102.6	64.7	39.9	30.4	34.5	31.4	85.3
15	100	67.2	100.6	63.4	39.1	29.8	34.3	31.2	83.1
16	100	67.2	98.1	61.8	38.1	29.1	34.0	30.9	82.1

Source: Oyo State Secretariat, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1999.

For workers on levels 01 to 03 in 1998 values of their salaries were less than 20 percent of the 1991 values. For those on levels 04 to 07, it was below 30 percent while for levels 08 to 16; it ranged between 30 and 33.9 percent of the 1991 values. By 1999, with increase range of 117.9 percent to 244.9 percent, only those on levels 10 and 13 reached 89.8 and 85.2 percent respectively. Workers on levels 08, 09, 12, 14 to were only able to reach between 69 to 83.3 percent of the base year values. Those on levels 01 to 07 made about 47.3 to 59.0 percent of the 1991 values.

There is a wide gap between the real and actual wages and salaries when CPI deflates it from 1979 –1998 for public servant on grade level 01, 08 and 15. This is illustrated as it relates to Federal civil servants in Table 5. it was found out that the actual wages and salaries are lower than the real wages and salaries that are sufficient to maintain minimum standard of living. Which means that the “take home pay” of the workers could not really “take them home”. The salary is not even sufficient to purchase basic necessities; hence their living standard is not influenced by the salary increases.

Table 5. Real ‘Take Home’ Wages And Salaries In The Public Sector, 1979 – 1998

YEAR	All ITEM CPI SEPT 1995=100	ACTUAL WAGES & SALARIES (N/MONTH)			REAL WAGES & SALARIES (N/MONTH)		
		GL.01	GL.08	GL.15	GL.01	GL.08	GL. 15
1979	38.8	76.50	309.50	876.00	201.32	797.68	2257.73
1980	42.7	106.00	333.50	901.00	248.24	783.37	2110.07
1981	51.5	125.00	349.50	944.00	242.72	678.64	1833.01
1982	55.5	161.00	431.50	1069.00	290.09	776.58	1926.13
1983	68.4	164.50	444.50	1104.50	240.50	649.85	1614.77
1984	95.5	168.00	458.00	1134.50	175.92	479.58	1187.96
1985	97.7	171.50	471.50	1200.00	175.54	482.60	1228.25
1986	105.4	175.00	485.00	1220.50	166.03	460.15	1157.97
1987	117.3	178.50	498.50	1239.60	152.17	425.34	1056.78
1988	181.2	275.00	526.40	1249.60	151.17	290.51	689.62
1989	272.7	312.00	558.28	1335.42	114.59	204.72	489.70
1990	292.8	350.00	590.16	1421.24	119.54	201.56	489.40
1991	330.0	410.00	718.06	1421.24	123.90	217.00	429.51
1992	478.4	982.08	1854.92	3713.00	205.43	387.73	776.13
1993	751.9	1373.60	2648.04	5263.50	182.68	352.18	700.03
1994	1180.7	1493.60	3102.24	6505.00	126.45	262.75	550.94
1995	2040.4	1561.62	3850.62	7037.84	79.08	189.21	379.66
1996	2638.1	1561.62	3850.62	7037.84	59.19	145.96	266.78
1997	2863.2	1612.30	4164.00	7596.90	56.31	145.43	265.33
1998	3149.2	2840.87	6381.33	12163.60	90.21	202.63	386.24

Sources: Derived from (i) FOS Data
(ii) Official Gazette, various editions.

Note: Compilation has taken Account of income Tax, Transport, Rent, Meal and other Allowance.

CPI = Consumer Price Index

GL = Grade Level 01 Lower, 08 Middle, 15 Upper

An interesting trend is discernable in these salary increases. The real values have continuously fallen over the preceding years of the increase. The nominal increases have only provided money illusion but no relief for the distressed workers who over the years have been worse off. These results confirm the declining trend in the real salary of civil servants and the inadequacy of nominal wage increases as a relief measure.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION EFFORTS

Poverty alleviation program started in Nigeria in 1986. Since then successive government programme had poverty Alleviation issues. These programme include free and compulsory primary Education, Adult and Mass Literacy schemes, Rural Electrification scheme, Rural banking scheme, Low cost Housing scheme, and water supply scheme and small scale Enterprises scheme. However, the implementation of these entire programmes has always been undermined by the activities of the corrupt politician both in the military and civilian and top government officials. Most of the money that is meant for these programmes was often misappropriated.

CONSTRAINTS TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES.

The constrains to the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria includes: -

- Poor Management of these programmes
- Lack of effective mechanism for projects monitoring during implementation
- Poor co-ordination of the programs during implementation.
- Failure to have an in-built mechanism for sustainability of the programs and programs benefit.
- Failure to involve the beneficiaries at both the conception and implementation stages.
- Failure to check the high level of instability within the macro-economic and policy environment
- Lack of political will from the public sector managers, specifically, lack of consistent integrated regime framework /policy in governance.

These constraints are often intensified by incessant fall of oil prices, (Nigeria major foreign exchange earner) mismanagement of the economy and corruption. Greater part of the Nigerian foreign exchange are used to pay foreign contractors, to service foreign debts and for the importation of essential commodities, majority of which only satisfy the frivolous consumption of the few elite. Only projects, which involve kickbacks that facilitated capital flight were engaged in, and over two thirds of Nigerian foreign reserve were looted in this way. Successive Nigeria government efforts in promoting Agriculture, provide incentives for the establishment of industries, provide infrastructure in cities and towns, and enabling environment, to attract local and foreign investors, has failed to produce desired result. For these reasons the living condition of the majority poor Nigerian, democratic government notwithstanding remain abysmally low

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- To alleviate poverty and improve employee's well being, the following policy recommendation should be considered.
- Government should vigorously pursue GDP increase through income and product per production increase multiplier.
- Involvement of other agencies such as NGO, UNDP, UNICEF and others
- Salary differentiation to be index to inflation and consumer price
- Self-employment generation for dependants of employees.

- Provision of infrastructure facilities such as Housing School, Hospitals, Good Road net work, etc. to reduce the welfare poverty of the masses especially employees.
- Change of institutional arrangement and activities of organization such as world banks and IMF to “Transfer” assets of the developing countries to the less. Developed countries.
- Empowerment of the poor through the provision of short Loans to enable the poor established their own small-scale business. This will reduce the number of dependent on each employee.
- Employers and employee representative or union should concentrate much more on non-monetary welfare packages such as provision of Housing, Transportation, and Health Facilities.
- Above all good governance based on democratic principle of improving the well being of the majority should be put in place.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from this study is that there are contradiction between policies on poverty alleviation and their implementation by the successive Nigerian government. Increasing polarisation between the “haves” and the “havenots” high energy cost, inadequate infrastructure, unemployment, increasing crime rate, ethnic and religious wars and inflation worsen the condition of the Nigerian workers in spite of all the salary increases. Consideration for the recommendations given in this paper will go a long way in reducing poverty and improve employee well being in Nigeria.

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He was a lecturer with Lagos State College of Education, Lagos Nigeria from 1982-1983. He joined the defunct Nigerian External Telecommunication Ltd (NET) as a commercial officer in 1983. He was re-appointed by the Nigeria Telecommunication Ltd (NITEL) which was formed after the Merger of Nigeria External Telecommunications Ltd and Telecommunications unit of the former Post and Telecommunications Department (P&T) in 1985. He is at present a Manager in charge of Administration at NITEL Headquarters Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State Nigeria. Dr. Dauda is an Associate Manager of Nigerian Institute of Management, Affiliate member Institute of personnel Management of Nigeria and Member International Industrial Relation Association IIRA. Among his publication are: Workers Management Co-operation for Productivity, Human Resource Management for Performance Improvement, Improving Revenue Generation and Collection: An Operational Approach, Nigeria Telecommunication Industry and the challenge of change. His Ph. D thesis is on Investment in Technological Innovation and Productivity in Nigerian Telecommunications Ltd.

He was the General Secretary and president of senior staff. Association of public corporation and postal and Telecomm Government owned Companies unit Ogun State Branch between 1987 and 1997.