

Contemporary Northern Nigerian Literature and the Poverty Discourse: A Critique of Aliyu Kamal's *Hausa Boy*

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ABSTRACT: *Literature plays numerous roles in the society: the cultural, the political, the religious, the economical, the social and the scientific (therapeutic). From the classical epochs to 21st century, writers have written and have been writing plays, poetry, novels, as well as short stories to educate, enlighten, persuade, warn and entertain their community, and sometimes the world at large. However, owing to the incessant changes in times, writers have to explore emerging themes such as migration, regional disputes, Aids, tribalism, terrorism, ethnic and religious violence, gender politics, institutionalized corruption and poverty for example. The aim of this paper is to explore the theme of poverty, as one of the contemporary thematic preoccupations in African literature in the 21st century, as portrayed in one of Aliyu Kamal's latest novellas, *Hausa Boy*. Set in the Northern part of Nigeria, Kamal's prime concern is to demonstrate how some families in the country feel the deep and painful bite of abject poverty, which not only forces them to live from hand to mouth, but also makes it thorny for them to send their children to school. The end result is the children; particularly the young girls become street hawkers, a trade which endangers their life in the long run. The paper also wants to unveil that of the handful of the under-privileged children that have been to school, a significant number of them shamelessly drop out, owing to their parents' inability to pay for their school fees. This further leads to the rising wave of the unemployment rate in the country. The paper reveals how poverty profoundly affects young men-women courtship, as it deters the former from fulfilling their cultural obligation of giving out some money token to their girl-friends and fiancées in each visit they pay to them as a sign of love. Yet, it is also a cultural practice, which causes the young men to suffer in Northern Nigeria's contemporary reality.*

KEYWORDS: Northern Nigeria, literature, poverty, discourse

INTRODUCTION

The discourse on poverty is highly contested and deeply entwined with a wide range of issues that

are frequently framed as poverty-related

----- K. Brock et al, *Poverty Reduction in Uganda and Nigeria* (155).

As a socio-economic, as well as cultural discourse, poverty is a contentious label brimmed with conundrums. Brock et al quoted above corroborate this assertion: depicting the term as “highly contested and deeply entwined”. This is because it is replete with avalanche of poverty-related discourses that are broad and multi- dimensional; “wide-range of issues that are frequently framed as poverty-related”. These unveil the deep and complex disposition of the term which is as aged as mankind, as well as the world itself. Thus, it is a global phenomenon with no race, society, community, culture, or nation that has never been “embraced” by poverty since the beginning of the world ever. The Northern Nigeria, a region which earned the Northern tag in 1903 Bala Usman (21) and Murray Last (61) cannot be exceptional to this natural catastrophe.

Poverty, in the part, that is known as Northern Nigeria today and by broad extension the nation at large is Aliyu Kamal’s prime concern in *Hausa Boy*, one of his recent novellas. In the novel, Kamal expresses his profound dismay with the rising wave on poverty in the region. He underscores that the endemic is so extreme that it forces innumerable families to live from hand to mouth. Couple with that, it compels some under-privileged children to involuntarily drop out of school either on the grounds that their parents cannot afford to pay the accumulated bill of their school fees or their final certificate examination(s) fees. What is more, in contemporary Northern Nigeria, poverty impels numerous parents, particularly whose financial constrain preclude them to send their daughters to school, to send them to street hawking instead. Their indigent mother’s ultimate ambition is to use the proceeds gained from the trade to purchase for the young girls, the marital gifts, with which they would be accompanied to their matrimonial home when they eventually get married. However, some thoughtless mothers, infuriated and frustrated by poverty, mercilessly whip their daughters so long as they fail to make any lucrative profit in the trade, or if they wholly loose the trade capital in the process. So, to shield themselves from the repeated penalties and humiliations of their mothers, the young ladies go to any length to make lucrative profit each moment they trade in order to recover the lost capital whatever it costs. These endanger their lives and in most cases lead them astray.

Moreover, abject poverty, begets by the rising wave on unemployment throws some penniless and jobless suitors to varying degrees of hardships owing to the courtship gift token, popularly known as “toshi”; an insignificant gift sum they are to culturally offer to their girl-friends or fiancées in each courtship visit they pay to them. A cultural practice which besmirches the girls reputation in the young men’s’ eyes and further exposes the ladies to money-induced courtship, thereby making a substantial proportion of them to accord much reverence and decorum to affluent boy-friends or suitors and look down on the impecunious ones. As the country has been torn apart or paralysed by dire poverty, some men resort to running multiple businesses, some of which may be outlawed, unethical or unscrupulous that invariably brings not only lucrative profit in the long run, but quick cash which is desperately needed by them in order to survive. These are Kamal’s prime concern in *Hausa Boy*.



What is Poverty?

The term poverty originated from the middle-English word *poverté*, which is from the Anglo-French *poverté* derived from the Latin *pauper*, *paupertat* or *paupertas*, meaning poor. In his master piece *The Idea of Poverty*, Paul Spicker argues that poverty “is one of the most researched and analyzed subjects in social sciences. Some of the studies for him “try to identify poverty, some to measure it and some to explain it” (1). If be so, then it is not astounding as Gorge Wilher’s opines that “almost everyone understands the meaning of poverty, but a universally acceptable and unambiguous definition is lacking” (6). This is could be the raison d’état that Ruth Lister in *Poverty* (2004), opines that “there is no single and ‘correct’ definition of the term (1). Ignatius et al concur with Lister who stress that poverty does not only lack an objective definition but in addition there is “no objective way of measuring” the proportion of those that are destitute (8). Be that as it may, Spicker in *The Idea of Poverty* provides what he depicts as eleven main cluster of the meaning of the term:

- Poverty refers, in the first instance, to material need
- 1. Poverty as specified need, people lack certain things that are essential to them.
food poverty, fuel poverty, housing poverty
- Poverty as a pattern of deprivation
- 2. Poverty to some is not about what people lack, it is a general condition where people are in need in various ways over an extended period of time, past, present and future
- 3. People are not poor because they are in bad house, but because they have been there and they cannot get out of it
- Poverty as a low standard of living

4. People who have low income or consumption over a period of time have to make do with less than others
 - Poverty as lack of resources
5. People are said to be poor if they lack the resources to obtain the things they want
 - Poverty as economic distance
6. If people have less resource than other people, they cannot afford the things that other people can afford. Where there is a competition for scarce resources, such as land or housing, they cannot afford them, even if they their income is higher than other people elsewhere
7. People cannot afford to live where they are (economic distance)
 - Poverty as economic class
8. A class in economic terms is determined by people's relationship to the system of production. The economic position of marginal workers, older people and disabled people means they are not able to command resources in many societies and they are likely to be poor
 - Poverty as social relationships
9. Social Class- People's social position depends on a combination of economic position, educational attainment
10. Social Status- It refers to the position of lowest class people who lack status, power and opportunities available to others
 - Dependency
11. Poverty arising from dependency is defined on social assistance or welfare
(4).

For World Bank however, poverty can be defined as lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor (2005). In an extended view, poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of presentation and freedom (2005). It is against this backdrop that in *Poverty* (2010), Maria Amidon Lusted remarks that "poverty has many faces, and it happens everywhere in the world" (6). The statistics further provided by Maria corroborates this assertion. "In 2008, 14 Billion people worldwide lived in extreme poverty another 1.9 billion people lived above the poverty line, but they did not make enough money to live comfortably, almost half of the world lived on less than \$ 2.50 per day" (7). Interestingly enough, she depicts the poverty in developing countries as extreme in that this form of poverty is "destitution or absolute poverty" (10) and "countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America often suffer from this type of poverty" (10). One prime motive for Amidon is that more than half of the population in these parts of the world earn \$1.25 dollar a day. For her, the bottom-line lies in that, even twelve-years later, the situation has increasingly been degenerating so much that the end is not insight today.



LITERATURE AND POVERTY

The discourse of poverty in literature is not a recent epistemological development. If the world has learnt from the classical literature of Homer, Pindar, Hesoid Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes Seneca, Horace and Vigil the mythological dogma that is tied to the cultural life of the Greeks and Romans, it has in addition discerned the class dichotomy of the classical society, as the hoi polloi is invariably depicted as repulsive, helpless/powerless, and inferior. The trend had not much altered from the Medieval Europe, the age of the Renaissance and up to 18th- century. These were the moments, when some laws and methods were enacted by the authorities to tackled poverty. An appropriate instance is what Amidon Lusted calls “Poor Laws” (16), which began in Britain in the 16th-century. Varying literary genres written in such epochs have portrayed varying degrees of the miseries and the sufferings of the poor. Similarly, when the Industrial Revolution began in 18th-century, it was not until in the Victorian Era or the Second Half of the 19th-century that it had reached its peak in Europe. Industrialization led to the acceleration of the rate of poverty in both Europe and North America as the factories that produced more goods brought greater profits to the factory owners and the workers got impoverished by the day, in addition to the poor working condition and health hazards they suffered. Among the innumerable Charle’s Dickens novels, a *Hard Times* is a clear example. What is more, if industrialization was the driving force in the increase of poverty in the 19th-century Europe, colonialism was a similar force that exacerbated poverty in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. As Amidon Lusted argues “the west reaped great wealth, while the natives who lived in colonies became poorer and poorer. Their bad situation was double-edged not only did they often suffered from terrible working conditions, but also their ability to grow their own food was often taken away as well” (18). This we decipher in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. In African context, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thian’g’o, Sembene Ousemene, Gabriel Okara, Ayei Kwe Armah have all unveiled the poverty-induced colonialism in their masterpieces and which had changed shape and face in the days of neo-colonialism, endlessly impoverishing the Africans and their lands. This is partly caused by the presence of neo-colonialism from the 70s in the continent and partly caused by the increasing mismanagement of Africa’s resources by the African leaders, bad leadership, corruption, poor economic policies in the continent, deemed as the root causes of modern poverty bedeviling Africa. Alex Addae-Koranke writes “poverty in Africa is caused by a number of factors including corruption and poor governance, limited employment opportunities, poor resource usage,” (147). Northern Nigeria is a crystal-clear example.

Poverty In Nigeria

In 2022, the National Bureau of Statistics published the latest and the most alarming report on what it described as the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index. According to the report, 63% of people living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multi-dimensionally poor. The National MPI is 0.257, indicating that poor people in Nigeria experience just over one-quarter of all possible deprivations. 65% of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the

South. Poverty levels across States vary significantly, with the incidence of multi-dimensional poverty ranging from a low of 27% in Ondo to a high of 91% in Sokoto. Over half of the population of Nigeria are multi-dimensionally poor and cook with dung, wood or charcoal, rather than cleaner energy. High deprivations are also apparent nationally in sanitation, time to healthcare, food insecurity, and housing. In general, the incidence of monetary poverty is lower than the incidence of multi-dimensional poverty across most states. In Nigeria, 40.1% of people are poor, according to the 2018/19 national monetary poverty line, and 63% are multi-dimensionally poor according to the National MPI 2022. Multi-dimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas. The National MPI is reported with a linked Child MPI, which provides additional information on Multi-dimensional Child Poverty in Nigeria. According to the report, two-thirds (67.5%) of children (0–17) are multi-dimensionally poor according to the National MPI, and half (51%) of all poor people are children. The highest deprivations are in the indicator of child engagements – where over half of poor children lack the intellectual stimulation that is pivotal to early childhood development. Child poverty is prevalent in rural areas, with almost 90% of rural children experiencing poverty. Across the geo-political zones, the child MPI shows higher poverty in the North-East and North-West (where 90% of children are poor) and lower poverty in the South-East and South-West (74% and 65.1% respectively). The incidence of Child MPI is above 50% in all States and greater than 95% in Bayelsa, Sokoto, Gombe and Kebbi.

The Discourse of Poverty in *Hausa Boy*

No sooner does the narrative flow sluggishly brings us to the family residence of the novella's hero Tasi Bello, than we swiftly decipher an impecunious family struggling under the painful bite of poverty, "the Bello family was poor" (27). We pity them when we learn that they can't afford a tap in the house which will allow them access to unadulterated water. They purchase the water they drink from the itinerant water sellers or they fetch it from the public taps instead. Although there is water in their well, it is so much contaminated by the pit latrine of their neighbours that they have resorted to using it for cooking their food and bath. In "Causes of Poverty in Africa: A Review of Literature", Alex Addae-Koranke is of the view that poverty is the paucity of "health, education, portable water and roads" (148). The justification provided by him is that these "preclude the poor from advancing in a welfare which is limited by a scarce availability of economic and social infrastructure" (148). In the view of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) report of 2003, "poverty is a vicious cycle being both the major cause and the effect of a situation in which no opportunities seem to exist for the poor to help themselves" (7). They indeed don't for the likes of Bello and his entire family in the world of *Hausa Boy*.

Worst are the lack of sufficient rooms in the house. Tasi shares a mini room with his older and younger brothers in the house and none of them has a bed for himself. Bashfully, their mattresses are so tattered that there is only a marginal abyss between them and mats. His father, Mallam Bello is an illiterate. This is the *raison d'être* he has resorted to doing some menial jobs in order to earn a living. Tasi's father was *ab-initio* a wood cutter, who could not even afford

to purchase the wood for use at home, but cut it for wood sellers instead, who in turn pay him for his work. Similarly, when Mallam Bello lost that job and he could not secure its equivalent or a much better one and life was so hard for he-himself and his entire family, he had to resort to taking the most degrading jobs of all. He hired donkeys and panniers which he used to sell gravel to those who needed it. Much more mortifying he didn't even have the money to pay prior he took the animals and the panniers until he returned from work in the late evening. This is tagged "extreme poverty" and as Amidon Lusted writes it is "life threatening and people in developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America often suffer from this type of poverty" (10).

Tasi winced again when he recalled the time that his father fell on hard times and resorted to selling gravel with the use of a pair of donkeys. He hired the animals and the panniers he filled with gravel. Tasi considered that as the lowest that his father could go down to-unless it was a rag picking at the rubbish dump or at worse carting human excrement (29).

If the above narrative piece expounds Tasi's father dire, penury state, then Amidon seems to hit the jack on the pot that "in developing regions, extreme poverty is earning less than \$1.25 a day" (10).

The veracity to this statistic is not far-fetched, as the money Mallam Bello earns from the varying degree of degrading jobs he undertakes to earn a living is so insufficient to cater for his family needs. Consequently, he could not afford to send his children to school. Among them, only Tasi was fortunate enough to complete his secondary school education. Yet, the young boy could not collect his result on the grounds that his father could not pay for his examinations fees. This impels his younger brother Iro to resort to becoming a commercial motorcyclist not only to earn a living but also to be economically independent. Tasi's father's failure to adequately take care of his family has some profound domestic repercussions. It compels his wife Kari to sometimes collect some items from Labaran, a young shopkeeper on credit, so that the family would eat. Soon enough Kari becomes heavily indebted to Labaran so much that Tasi has to pawn his mobile-phone to the shopkeeper to mollify his mother, when Labaran turns up to collect his money and there is none to be given to him. One gets perplexed and appalled, when the young man reminds his mother about his father's repeated warnings against collecting some items on credit from Labaran and Kari in turn reminds her son about his father's failure to satisfactorily feed the family:

What can I do? She asked helplessly. Bringing the back of her hand into the palm of the other. There will be no food in the house, but there are children to feed. I can't let them go hungry (32).

According to Amdion Lusted, “a person is considered poor if his or her income falls below the poverty line, or poverty level. This is the minimum amount an individual requires to meet basic needs” (8). What is more, Kari goes much further than that for in order to be economically independent, earning a little sum no matter how microscopic it may be, Tasi’s mother became the self-appointed manager and treasurer of the Hausa cultural, non-banking money deposit popularly known as “Adashe”. There are innumerable depositors and no sooner each depositor deposits the prescribed amount to her than she in turn gives the total sum to the person, who is her/her turn to receive the money. Another poverty-induced embracement occurs when it is the turn of a woman to receive the substantial amount and Kari has spent it. Tasi is in attendance and the young man has to pay the woman her four-hundred-Naira, which his father has given him to collect back his phone from Labaran. This is why Amidon argues that “poverty limits a person in many ways. It impacts a person’s health, and his or her prospects for employment and education” (12) and Tasi and his family are undoubtedly a case in point. In *Understanding Poverty*, Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee et al are in concurrence with Amidon and transcend her. For them: “the poor are not just cold and hungry; they are also frequently malnourished, illiterate, prone to sickness, unemployment, alcoholism and depression” (xiii). Indeed, Tasi’s family are “hungry”, “illiterate” and “depressed” by the ceaseless bite of poverty. In the view of Ignatius Okusun et al, one of the most important demographic causes of poverty is parental status. For them, some people are poor in that, “they were born to poor parents” (11). Tasi Bello is thus poor, owing to his parental indigent status.





So, in a bid to rescue his family from their abject poverty state, Tasi resolves to seek for an assistance from Uncle Nadudu, whom he deems as opulent. Little wonder that Nadudu too isn't a man of substance as Tasi previously thought, though in contradistinction to his father, his uncle is indeed a half-affluent man, who tries any sort of business that brings him quick cash. This Nadudu deems absolutely mandatory, as the nation has been profoundly paralyzed by poverty. We confirm this when Jazuli his son tells Tasi that "there is a lot of poverty. Father keeps it at bay by behaving like an average Hausa man and pursuing more than one job at a time"(96). Consequently, he turns his attention to the black market petrol sale as his prime source of earning a livelihood run by his eldest son Jazuli.

His uncle wasn't a wealthy man, but led a life more comfortable than that of Baban Hamza. Although going by the Hausa maxim, you know a man from his vocation, he couldn't pin his uncle down. His reputation of being a man about town indicated that Tasi could depend on him (45).

Nadudu's abrupt resolution to involve Tasi in his black market petrol business, in spite of the young man's lie to him that he has completed his Diploma indisputably translates the man's absolute comprehension of Tasi's parents deplorable living condition and Nadudu believes that their son's latest job would accord them a sudden penury relief. "I am more concerned with Tasi's father, who finds it very difficult to provide every day for the family" (65). The veracity

appears to us soon, for no sooner Tasi returns home with his uncle's job offer news to his parents to seek for their approval, he gives his mother five-hundred Naira out of the one-thousand Naira Nadudu has given him and a little some to Barmani, his girl-friend as a courtship gift. Similarly, on his second visit home shortly after he has begun his black market petrol sale job along with Jazuli, he bequeaths some money to his mother and Barmani once again out of the substantial sum he has been given as his post-petrol-sale share.

However, it is not only the hero and his entire family that have been severely hit by abject poverty, but Barmani, his girl-friend and her family either. Dropping out of the Qur'anic School and then subsequently Islamiyya School, the young lady sells kola nuts, groundnuts and cakes in the street. For the western education, her parents have not enrolled her even to primary school, let alone for her to think of proceeding to the next school after. The motive behind her street hawking trade becomes crystal clear to us when she tells Tasi during his courtship visit to her one-night.



“I used to go the Qur'anic school in the morning and late-afternoon not anymore. Father wanted it to be so, but mother wants me to go out selling things, like kola nuts, groundnuts, boiled gujiya peas or sesame seed cakes” (24).

We decipher a little more about this, when her boyfriend asks Barmani about her father's view in connection with her dropping out of the two schools in preference for the street hawking trade. The young lady replies that:

“His mother shares the same view with my mother. She said that mother must buy me some marriage gifts for me to take to my husband's house. My father can't buy everything. He still insists that I go to school, but he can't go against his mother's wishes (24).

Although, purchasing marital gifts by mothers for their beloved daughters is a time-honoured cultural practice in Northern Nigeria, for which reason Mallam Balliya's mother ab-intio insisted that her granddaughter must trade in the street for her mother, even when her son wanted his daughter not to leave the formal, Quranic and Islamiyya schools, it also demystifies that Mallam Balliya is akin to Mallam Bello, Tasi's Father, who cannot cater for the needs of his family. This vividly denotes that he cannot also purchase for his daughter all that is culturally required to take to her matrimonial home when she gets married, saving her from the street hawking trading. In stark contrast to Safiyya, Uncle Nadudu's daughter, the young lady sells nothing in the street, even when her mother Hanne fully knows that a similar cultural responsibility awaits her when her daughter is getting married. Thus, the message by Kamal is unequivocal: marital gifts, purchased by the Hausa Northern Muslim parents marrying off their daughter is customary, prescribed by the culture. Yet, street hawking trade, a sort of common business among the Hausas on which some mothers, mostly, with illiterate or poor background solely depends on to procure money with which they use to do their part in their daughters' marriage, particularly buying kitchen utensils, bed sheets and buckets, etc, and leaving the rest to the father, is unethical and poverty-induced. It impels the likes of Barmani to involuntarily turn to street hawkers which degrades their image and status. So, the heavy insults accompanied by severe beatings Barmani has suffered from her mother are not only as a result of losing the profit and the entire trade capital, but poverty-induced either. This is also the reason why Shirwa, her mother, does not care to know how and where her daughter has got the money she has paid her back. So, by the time the unpleasant news of her daughter's illegitimate pregnancy scandal reaches the town's ears, then she realises the irreversible flaw she has committed. According to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) report of the year 2003, “60 percent of the world's poor are women and girls” (7). Barmani and her mother are an archetypical of such girls and women in question.

Consequently, Tasi's ultimate decision to avoid Barmani in preference to Safiyya, Nadudu's daughter who is equally his cousin comes at the moment when he realizes that as indigent, he cannot offer financial support to the poor Barmani:

But the young man was more shocked, aggrieved and devastated that he could do nothing to save his girlfriend from mother inflicted torture. Both he and Barmani had a severe and acute problem

money. She couldn't help him, he couldn't help her. For him at least the only way out was to flee. He therefore fled (129).

His abandonment of Barmani symbolises defeat against cultural trivialities in difficult times. Moreso, his humorous, thoughtless and appalling act in the end, when he betrays Nadudu's trust, thereby personalizing his uncle's money as he uses it without Nadudu's consent to purchase the needful trousseau, just to convince Safiyya's family that he is capable of marrying their daughter disenchant the reader for Tasi's unscrupulous character, which implicitly translates his ungratefulness to his uncle, who has delightfully help his nephew out of his penury condition. It is a well-calculated plan; for Tasi quite knows that in spite of his unscrupulous act, he would be fully supported by Dudu, his uncle's grandmother who brought Nadudu up. Doing so would bring his family and Nadudu's closer, a development that would favour the young Tasi a great deal, as Nadudu, who is better off than his father with varying degrees of business connections, could subsequently secure the young man a better job to take a good care of his daughter and his parents. *In Poverty: A New Perspective*, Wilher argues that "people in poverty are as much in evidence today as ever" (1). For Englama and Bamidele "poverty in both relative and absolute terms refers to circumstance where a person is not able to fend or provide sufficiently for his or her necessities or fundamental human requirements such as clothing and decent accommodation, food, the fulfilment of social and economic responsibilities, non-access to productive employment, lack of skills, resources and confidence have restricted admission to economic and social infrastructure. These include access to health, education, potable water, sanitation and roads" (150). Bello's and Barmani's family are victims of these socio-economic, catastrophes in *Hausa Boy*.

The Way Forward

So, the million dollar question is how should the government alleviate poverty that has hit the nation, with the Northern part being the hardest hit? Ignatius Okosun, et al are of the standpoint that this is possible in the following ways:

The first simple task is to detect the hoi polloi and their indispensable needs. These basic needs may differ for varying degrees of poverty either chronic or transitional. Some of such basic socio-economic necessities encompass food and nutrition, health care, education, shelter, clothing transport and employment. The components to these are:

Economic component, to promote broad-based economic growth and create employment and income generating opportunities for both poor and non-poor, but with special attention to be accorded to the poor. Employment-generating projects may include labour-intensive public work projects and support for micro-enterprises which are usually labour intensive.

Social services component by which to provide education, health and sanitation services, clean water, nutrition, physical and socio-economic infrastructure, power supply, transport for example all of which are targeted at the poor

Safety-net component which involves providing relief for the old, disabled and destitute and to provide targeted assistance to the transitorily poor, including the use of existing and newly-created institutions that can reach out to the poor and non-poor.

(12).

CONCLUSION

Poverty may sometimes be a choice, in addition to the above innumerable causes to it. Consequently, some Nigerians are merely poor in that, they are indolent, non-inventive or intoxicated by the dependency culture (to depend on your parents or brothers or relatives just because they are opulent). By this, it denotes that even among those who are literate and they are fortunate enough to have secured a job, working in a government or in private institutions, they do run some varying degrees of entrepreneurial businesses in order to survive, owing to the profound poverty disposition that has hit the nation hard, let alone those who are illiterate or retired. In truth, they ought to be more diligent and creative than their literate counterparts, so as to be self-employed and that they may even in due course employ others. In this case, Mallam Bello, Tasi's father, and Barmani's father are clear examples in point. Yet, even here, challenges do arise when a poor illiterate may be diligent and ingenious but he/she lacks the business capital to invest even in a puppet business that hopes to potentially blossom. Another phenomenal challenge is the lack of the provision of the enabling environment by the government for which reason myriads of businesses become absolutely impossible or collapse at the beginning stage. At times, someone, may endeavour to secure the little capital he/she requires to start, but the bite of poverty on him/her may be so severe that, he/she may spend the entire business capital and the little profit made in the twinkling of an eye, leaving him/her much poorer than he/she is, as even menial jobs which mostly are exclusively undertaken by the illiterate and the under-privileged are hard to come by in contemporary Northern Nigeria. Yet, Bello's and Barmani's family's poverty may be intense, not only because they have been born poor, but also owing to the poor government economic policies that might that have deprived them some basic social infrastructures and daily life relief opportunities.

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