Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development Goals in Rural Areas in Nigeria: A Study of Selected Local Government Areas in Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined poverty reduction and SDGs in rural areas in Nigeria with reference to selected local government areas in Enugu State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design and made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The population of the study was 722,664 people of the three local government areas selected to represent Enugu State, while the sample size was 400 derived via Taro Yamani formula size determination. The cluster sampling technique was applied to select the sample from the population of the study, while the data collected were presented and analyzed using frequency percentage and chi-square (X^2) analysis. The study revealed a number of factors contributing to increasing rate of poverty in the rural areas in Nigeria -corruption, debt burden, unemployment, overdependence on oil, lack of political will, ethno-religious conflicts among others. The study also revealed the challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria -endemic corruption, lack of effective policies, lack of accountability, insecurity, poor infrastructure among others. The study discovered the SDGs based rural poverty reduction strategic framework in place for rural areas in Nigeria to include job creation, adequate budgetary allocation, integrated rural development program, provision of basic needs, creation of awareness, adoption of the basic needs strategy, full integration of the rural poor, targeting among others. Finally, the study also revealed bottom-up approach, capacity acquisition, provision of infrastructure, inter-agency cooperation, objective targeting among others as measures to efficient implementation of SDGs in rural poverty reduction in Nigeria. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that the Nigerian government should address the issues of poverty reduction programs via effective implementation of poverty reduction related program/policies among others.*
KEYWORDS: poverty, development, poverty reduction, rural area, SDGs

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The country is richly endowed with abundant natural resources like petroleum, gas, rubber, cocoa, limestone and other gifts of nature. At present, it is experiencing one of the world's highest economy growth rates averaging 7.4 percent (Aliyu & Dansabo, 2017). Paradoxically, despite these natural resources, the country is facing the menace of poverty at alarming rate especially in the rural areas which has been difficult to eradicate (Hussaini, 2014).

Rural poverty in Nigeria exists in multi-dimensions and proportions. It is an experience commonly associated with persistent communal conflicts, poor health conditions, lack of portable water supply, lack of basic education, gender inequality, lack of good shelter, superstition, diseases, poor sanitation, hunger and high rate of fertility. Rural poverty is seen as a "paradox" in a country like Nigeria blessed with abundant natural resources for which it is considered as one of the wealthiest in Sub Saharan Africa. This poverty phenomenon has recently attracted the concern of international bodies because of its attendant rate of affliction, suffering and pains.

Rural poverty is a disease that seriously affects the rural people in many areas of life. This includes health, finance, housing, transportation and economic growth. Therefore, given the poor socioeconomic conditions of the rural areas, one cannot overlook the dangers of poverty and the necessary need to reduce poverty which as a "monster" is affecting several millions of rural dwellers resulting in inequality, worsening economic conditions, lack of basic needs like education, electricity, and mass transit that are seen as luxury in the rural areas which gave rise to the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the MDGs have no clear transformative vision because their major focus was towards alleviating the effect of poverty without capturing the required fundamentals in achieving a sustainable outcome, hence its replacement with SDGs, which are more inclusive and sustainable (Luna & Montaño, 2017). Thus, in 2015, the United Nation approved the 2030 sustainable development agenda to holistically address the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainable development (Abraham & Pingali, 2017). Nevertheless, despite the SDGs target year of 2030 which is quickly approaching, in 2018 to date, Nigeria has overtaken India to become the country with the highest number of people living in extreme poverty (Akpan & Isihak, 2020). Hence, unless the country invests concerted efforts in combating poverty, achieving the SDGs in 2030 will be quite elusive.

In the light of the level of poverty in the rural areas of Nigeria, this study is intended to suggest remedies to this problem by looking at sustainable development goals that can reduce the effect of poverty and enhance improvement in the living conditions of the rural people in rural areas in Nigeria.

Problem Statement

Poverty results in insults and abuses especially when seeking for assistance or help from close friends or siblings (Jaiyeola & Bayat, 2020). Rural poverty is connected to mental poverty, lack of basic education, inability to satisfy basic needs, inability to pay children school fees, and communal or family disputes over limited resources or access to land use. This condition gives rise to afflictions, pain and frustration at the village level with high fertility rate. People hardly feed or have the capacity to better their socioeconomic conditions. There are general deprivations which often make rural people to be aggressive and warlike. These conditions of suffering among rural dwellers are vividly summarized by Asoegwu (2018) in the following manner:

> *Poverty is an agonizing condition which results in inability to control self, particularly when one is hungry or relatively deprived. It causes people to be engaged in armed robbery, prostitution, house breaking, stealing and high rate of crime especially among miscreants who under these conditions threaten the peace of the area, while family heads resort to drunkenness as a way to escape from the heavily hearted depressive conditions of life. Rural poverty can be seen than imagined in the conditions of the rural houses, environmental hazards, cooking utensils, clothes, food and hygienic conditions with several health challenges.*

However, though at different periods the government and donor agencies have made several efforts to tackle this problem, the situation seems to defile any solution which made rural livelihood very miserable. Based on this, poverty reduction in the rural areas in Nigeria becomes imperative and need urgent attention via the implementation of the SDGs to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the rural people.

Based on this, the research study sought to ascertain whether there are factors contributing to increasing poverty in rural areas in Nigeria; whether there are challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria; and whether there are SDGS based poverty reduction strategic frameworks in place for rural areas in Nigeria. Therefore, in line with the above questions, the main objectives of this research study include - to identify the factors contributing to increasing rural poverty in Nigeria; examine the challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria; and find out the SDGS based rural poverty reduction strategic frameworks in place for rural areas in Nigeria. In like manner, the raised null hypotheses of the research study predicts that there are factors contributing to increasing rural poverty in Nigeria; there are challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria; and there are SDGs based rural poverty reduction strategic frameworks in place for rural areas in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Explanations

Concept of Rural: Most people probably have a fairly clear idea what is meant by 'rural'. However, the definition of rural is not as clear-cut as one might think. In the context of this study rural is defined fairly broadly. It relates primarily to areas that have a relatively low population density compared to cities, areas where agriculture and related activities usually dominate the landscape and economy, and places where transport and communications need to cover relatively large distances making travel and service provision relatively difficult and costly. However, our definition also includes the towns (as opposed to cities) that are located in these areas and which are linked to them culturally and economically by acting as a focal point for people living in the surrounding areas - places where they can meet, exchange goods and services, and find transport to larger urban centers. Finally, we are also interested to some extent in the peripherals-urban areas - the areas that lie on the fringes of the urban environment, including the edge of major cities.

Concept of Poverty: Poverty as "the absence of the capacity to acquire the means to sustain a standard of living" (Kamruzzaman, 2016).Poverty is further defined as "not having enough to eat, a high rate of infant mortality, a low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, poor water, inadequate health care, unfit housing and a lack of active participation in the decision-making processes (Omomowo, 2018). According to World Bank Development Report (1990), poverty is defined as "inability of certain persons to attain a minimum standard of living." Ozden & Chinedu, (2017) maintained that poverty is "lack of basic necessities of life."

Concept of Poverty Reduction: This is a coherent plan aimed at transferring resources towards a targeted population with the intention to improve their socioeconomic "welfare profile". The strategy involves skill acquisition, job creation, rural development schemes and providing basic needs to the people. According to Nnaeto and Umeh 2020), the rural dwellers cannot experience tangible poverty reduction until such needs like portable water; good roads; quality and affordable healthcare and education; security of life and property; rural electrification; credit facility etc that can create and ensure sustenance of improved quality of life are provided.

Concept of Sustainable Development Strategies: This is a multifaceted plan of government which as "support activities" is intended to deal with the poverty problem while positively impacting on the life of the people in order to improve their conditions of living. These are economic, social, Institutional and environmental in nature (Oleribe & Taylor-Robinson, 2016).

Factors Contributing to Increasing Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Corruption: Corruption is one of the causes of the increasing poverty in Nigeria. In any successful government, the public sector is determined by the effective utilization of workers. Regrettably, however, the public sector in Nigeria is damaged by a high level of corruption, bribery, and fraud. This scenario has led to inefficiency, diversion of resources, and general infrastructure decay in the country (Ogunlana, 2019). Pathetically, this corruption exists at all levels (government, private and individual) in Nigeria (Salihu & Gholami, 2018). Literature posits a positive relationship between corruption and poverty, which means where there is a high level of corruption there will also be a high level of poverty (Dankumo et al., 2019). Besides, the intentional act of total negligence of the fundamental attributes of good governance such as consensus oriented; participation; rule of law; effectiveness and efficiency; accountability; transparency; responsiveness; equity and inclusivity is a significant manifestation of corruption among Nigeria leaders which remains major cause of poverty among the rural populace (Nnaeto & Okoroafor, 2016). Therefore, corruption is a major cause of the increasing poverty in Nigeria.

Debt burden: Debt burden is one of the factors that is increasing poverty in Nigeria. This is because the resources needed for development and economic growth are diverted to service the debts annually; consequently, reducing the expenditure that is expected to be spent on physical and social infrastructure for the benefit of the poor citizen (Omoniyi, 2018a). The consistent falling price of crude oil, coupled with the increasing percentage of external debts is limiting the chances for government to have sufficient resources for the execution of effective poverty reduction programs in Nigeria.

Unemployment: Unemployment is also a factor that increases poverty in Nigeria. When people are unemployed, the cost of living becomes very high for them, and their standard of living remains very low. Their source of livelihood drains over time. Hence, there is a strong correlation between poverty and unemployment (Ucha, 2010). Unemployment has a serious effect of creating and increasing widespread poverty among households and individuals, leading to limited access to education and health opportunities, access to good housing, increase family vulnerability, and loss of self-confidence.

Overdependence on oil: Over-reliance on crude oil in Nigeria has led to abandoning all other economic sectors to absolute dependence on oil. The embezzlement of the oil resources by the Nigerian leaders and the present crash in the price of oil globally has created a serious problem in the Nigerian economy, hence, increasing poverty in the country. Literature supported that agriculture is a very good sector that can promote the status of Nigeria's international trade, however, the overreliance on oil while neglecting agriculture has increased the poverty level and crime in the country (Adeniyi & Dinbabo, 2020).

Lack of Political will: Lack of Political will is another major cause of increasing poverty in Nigeria. Studies have established a correlation between politics and the reduction of poverty within a community (Egwemi, n.d). The reality is that the increasing poverty in Nigeria has gone beyond mere examining the causes and proffering solutions to them. In other words, there is a need for a sincere commitment to adopting strategies and taking measures in reducing poverty in Nigeria. This is only possible when there is political will which is lacking among Nigerian leaders. Lack of political will is a major obstacle to development. For example, if the fund budgeted for development is embezzled by leaders; it will affect the whole development goal.

Ethno-religious conflicts: Ethno-religious conflict is also a major setback to the development of Nigeria, leading to an increase in the poverty level of the country. The consistent destruction of properties and killing of lives as a result of ethno-religious clashes has seriously affected the economic growth and development of the country. As a result, what is expected to be invested in the programs that are aimed at reducing poverty in the country will be diverted to the affected communities to mitigate the effect of the damages within the affected communities. The Ethno-religious conflict is capable of crippling all economic activities within a community; consequently, increasing the poverty level in society (Akpa & Nebeife, 2017).

Lack of access to loan: Due to lack of loan, most poor farmers are not capable of farming on a scale that matches their labor resources. There is a dire shortage of working capital. Rural banking is a recent phenomenon with few community banks. The loan system is too difficult because most rural people do not have what the banks need. Besides, the procedure is also difficult and bank managers only use prebendalism as a means to grant access to loan. This shortage limits the productiveness of farming in general. High-interest rate and lack of collateral required by financial institutions are some of the factors responsible for lack of access to loan by rural dwellers and it affects their possibility of growing out of the poverty cycle.

Lack of skill acquisition or capacity enhancement: In many rural areas labor is unskilled or semi skillful. This causes unemployment. Where the people are trained to acquire skill, they may lack the necessary enhancement or empowerment to be functionally engaged. For instance, they may be trained as local drivers with driving licenses but no vehicles. It is therefore essential to empower these people with motor cycles or tricycles (KekeNAPEP, n.d) vehicles for wealth creation.

Lack of rural infrastructures: Rural infrastructures support the productive capacity of rural areas and lack of it pose a challenge to production activities in rural areas. Infrastructures such as access roads, health, electricity, housing, potable water, among others are unevenly distributed in most rural areas in Nigeria.

Lack of functional education: Education is necessary for Poverty alleviation. Basic education creates awareness that is necessary to eradicate poverty by engaging in useful

or productive ventures of life. Many of the poor are uneducated. The few educated ones do not have functional education or access to other forms of informal training that should enhance their skills for self-employment and reliance. Uneducated rural dwellers find it difficult to apply modern farming tools and plan effectively. The lack of productive and functional education with useful skills is indicative of the endless trap of poverty in rural areas.

SDGS and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria
Eradicating poverty remains one of the major challenges within the globe. The aim of achieving this poverty reduction was not fully achieved during the MDGs implementation. After obligating to SDGs, different countries in the world started to demonstrate these goals into their development planning for effective implementation. The goals become the goal that countries across the globe put efforts towards actualizing. Nigerian government started to integrate them into its development planning for effective implementation. Some of its general commitment towards achieving the goals include the effort made at the legislative level to facilitate the process of SGDs by establishing two committees in the national assembly: There is a Senate Committee to ensure appropriate allocation of funds for the SDGs and there is also a committee on the same subject matter in the House of Representatives; Establishing the office of the senior special assistant to the president on SDGs, which is a legacy of MDGs that has the responsibility to oversee poverty reduction programs; and Inter-ministerial committee on SDGs established to see the smooth interface between the agencies, departments, and ministries (Nayyar, 2012).

To address goal 1 of SDGs, which is " no poverty", several strategies were adopted by the Nigerian government to help in reducing poverty in the country. For instance, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Safety Investment Program (NSIP) to address hunger and poverty in the country in 2016, allocating $1.3 billion of its budget to the institution of the first phase of its social safety nets system (Osondu-Oti, 2020).. The program was established deliberately as an effort to accomplish the goal, where the vulnerable and the poor are targeted. The packages under this safety program include Cash Transfer which reached approximately 300,000 poor and vulnerable household; N-Power Program that also empowered 500,000 youths within the age bracket of 18-35; and the National Home Grown School Feeding Program which provided to 9.9 million within 33 states and also empowered 107,862 cookery staff across the states. Poverty eradication remains a global challenge. Though there is a rapid achievement in combating poverty in countries like India and China, African country such as Nigeria's war against poverty is proven very difficult (Osondu-Oti,2020).

Some of the challenges in fighting poverty in Nigeria are discussed as:
Endemic corruption: One of the foremost challenges of SDGs in fighting poverty in Nigeria is endemic corruption. The country has all the available natural and human resources required for a country to develop and make life good to its masses. However,

the benefits of these resources are not trickling down to benefit the poor people due to the effect of corruption in the country (Dankumo et al., 2019). All the efforts made by successive administrations in Nigeria to reduce poverty in the country and the eventual failures of those efforts were a result of corruption within the leadership of the country. Corruption has eaten deep into all aspects of society such that the money that is supposed to be used for poverty reduction programs will always be handled wrongly, hence, leading to the high cost of governance and lack of effective delivery (Okunola et al., 2019).

Lack of effective policies: For a successful poverty reduction in Nigeria, effective pro-poor policies remain a pre-condition (Anyanwu, 2013). Another major challenge in achieving poverty reduction programs in Nigeria is the incompetence of the policy-makers to initiate and implement effective policies that can address the multidimensional poverty in the country. In Nigeria, the elites are the ones that hijacked and frustrate all the opportunities that will end in benefiting the poor through all available chances to divert the public resources for their benefits (Ukeje et al., 2020). This is why most of the poverty reduction policies are not aimed at reaching the poor at the grassroots.

Lack of accountability: Since corruption is apparent at all the administrative levels in Nigeria, there is no much concern on the people given the responsibility to execute or supervise on poverty reduction program to give feedback on their assignments. Consequently, the government cannot easily track the records of its programs accurately to know the failure or successes of the poverty reduction program executed (Osondu-Oti, 2020). With this, the reports on those programs can easily be adulterated. Therefore, lack of accountability is a serious challenge in achieving any program that is aimed at addressing poverty within society.

Insecurity: Nigeria is a country that is affected by a high rate of insecurity such as the Boko-Haram insurgency, kidnapping, militancy, banditry and herder-farmer conflicts, among others. The insecurity according to Nwozor et al. (2019), is becoming a serious challenge to the SDGs in its efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty in the country. This is because the number of internally displaced persons, as well as people losing their livelihood, is always on the increase due to lack of conduciveness in the environment. The effect of this conflict will be an increase in the number of jobless people, an increase in hunger, disease, and a rapid increase in poverty. The result of all these is that government will find it very difficult to adequately satisfy the needs of the poor.

Poor infrastructure: Another major challenge in achieving SDGs 1 in Nigeria is the poor state of its infrastructure such as lack of good roads, which is hindering the leaders to even have access to the people at the grassroots who are the main victims of poverty in Nigeria. According to Kanayo (2014), the state of infrastructure that facilitates industrialization and provides employment through both small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) sector, which can help in reducing poverty is embarrassing because

it is exceptionally insufficient. The roads that connect towns and villages are dilapidated, hence, making it difficult to conduct businesses to improve the livelihood of the poor people. These roads have a significant role to play in achieving the first goal of SDGs

SDGS Based Rural Poverty Reduction Strategic Frameworks in Rural Areas in Nigeria
In view of the magnitude and dimensions of poverty in the rural areas, it is necessary to establish a framework that will serve as a plan of action needed to achieve the purpose of improving the livelihood of the poor rural dwellers. This proposed strategic framework as a driving factor will include: job creation, integrated rural development, provision of basic needs, targeting among others.

Job Creation: The aim of this strategy is to provide jobs to the poor households and give opportunity to those who are not gainfully employed to augment their income so as to meet their basic needs. The process involves skill acquisition, capacity enhancement schemes through microcredit programs and establishment of adequate vocational training centers.

Adequate budgetary allocation: This will empower the people and prepare them for self-employment. This means that budgetary allocation must also be adequate to cater for these needs. Where budgetary allocations are not adequate, there will be risk of dumping the rural people who in the face of frustration may resort to farming without assets.

Integrated Rural Development Program: This strategy must view the rural areas as domains for poverty reduction. A large part of the population lives in the rural areas where basic needs and amenities are lacking.

Provision of basic needs: Since poverty is pervasive in the rural areas, this strategy laid emphasis on the provision of basic needs to the poor. These include health care, housing, portable water supply, education, food and employment. It recognizes "community-based initiates such as community-based organizations and community development associations (Omoniyi, 2018). The strategy addresses spatial growth as a single entity in which case neglecting one aspect causes harm to other aspects. Therefore, land use and socioeconomic planning must be given the attention it deserves (Wali & Sanusi, 2017).

Creation of awareness: There is need to create awareness through workshops, seminars, village announcer, and other local media so that effective participation in poverty reduction programs can be achieved.

Adoption of the Basic Needs Strategy: The adoption of the Basic Needs Strategy is equally important in the reduction of poverty in the rural areas. The rural people are poor and can hardly afford good shelter, health care, education and adequate

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environmental sanitation. In most cases movement from one village to the other is by foot or by the use of bicycle for the traditionally "rich people". This strategy therefore calls for the provision of essential needs like rural mass transit, food, housing, health care, sanitation, education, portable water and environmental protection. In order that the poor rural dwellers can achieve these basic needs, there should be proper targeting of the poor as a target group. This is because in most cases the provision of these basic needs is done on the basis of prebendal politics which only favor those in power to the neglect of communities that lack people in government.

Full integration of the Rural Poor: Also, in order that the poor rural dwellers can sustain these projects, they should be fully integrated in the planning and management of the programs. This will create hospitality and ensure the protection of the projects without being vandalized. This strategy requires a bottom-up approach which gives households or unsatisfied communities opportunity to air their views in the choice of project site.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers applied a descriptive research method. Descriptive survey research design according to Osuala (2013) is that research which specifies the nature of a given phenomenon. Descriptive survey research gives a picture of a situation or a population. The study involves the adult people of Enugu State irrespective of sex, social and economic status, religious affiliation and level of education. The researchers used two major sources of data in this research work viz: primary and secondary sources of data. The study area is Enugu State, South-East of Nigeria. The study took place in three local governments selected from the three senatorial Zones that make up the Enugu State; Enugu-East Local Government for Enugu East Senatorial Zone, Igbo Etiti Local Government for Enugu North Senatorial Zone, and Oji-River Local Government for Enugu West Senatorial Zone. The population of this study is the people of the three local governments selected to represent Enugu State. The population of the study is therefore seven hundred and twenty-two thousand six hundred and sixty-four (722,664) people of the three local governments that constitute Enugu Metropolis. The population is presented on table 1. below based on the areas/cities/communities in each of the three local government areas under study.

Table 1Population Distribution Table

Local Governments/Areas Studied	Population	Percentage (%)
Oji-river Local Government Area		
Akpugo-Eze	30,002	4.2
Awlaw	46,978	6.5
Inyi	39,614	5.5
Achi Agu	32,023	4.4
Achi-Uno	53,720	7.4
Oji-River Urban	24,311	3.4
Ugwu Oba	18,204	2.5
Total	**244,852**	**33.9**
Igbo Etiti Local Government Area		

Aku	59,844	8.2
Ohodo	48,139	6.7
Ohededim	12,004	1.7
Ukehe	26,734	3.7
Ikolo	8,421	1.2
Onyohor	10,253	1.4
Ozalla	14,022	1.9
Diogbe/Umunko	19,306	2.7
Total	**198,723**	**27.5**
Enugu East Local government Area		
Nike	52,632	7.3
Emene	78,016	10.8
Abakpa	77,327	16.2
Trans-Ekulu	31,114	4.3
Total	**279,089**	**38.6**
Grand Total	**722,664**	**100**

Source: Planning Unit of the Three Local Government in Enugu Urban Area, 2023

Due to the largeness of the population of the study, the researchers applied Yamani (1964) statistical formula (n $= N/1+N(e)^2$)cited in Obi and Ugwu (2012) to reduce the population to a researchable size to 400 as showcased in table 2 below

Sample Size Distribution Table

Local Governments/Area Studied in Enugu	Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Oji-River Government Area			
Akpugo-Eze	30,002	17	4.2
Awlaw	46,978	26	6.5
Inyi	39,614	22	5.5
Achi Agu	32,023	18	4.4
Achi-Uno	53,720	30	7.4
Oji-River Urban	24,311	13	3.4
Ugwu Oba	18,204	10	2.5
Total	**244,852**	**136**	**33.9**
Igbo Etiti Local Government Area			
Aku	59,844	33	8.2
Ohodo	48,139	26	6.7
Ohededim	12,004	7	1.7
Ukehe	26,734	14	3.7
Ikolo	8,421	5	1.2
Onyohor	10,253	6	1.4
Ozalla	14,022	8	1.9
Diogbe/Umunko	19,306	11	2.7
Total	**198,723**	**110**	**27.5**
Enugu East Local government Area			
Nike	52,632	29	7.3
Emene	78,016	43	10.8
Abakpa	77,327	65	16.2
Trans-Ekulu	31,114	17	4.3
Total	**279,089**	**154**	**38.6**
Grand Total	**722,664**	**400**	**100**

Source: Research Report 2023**.**

The cluster Sampling Technique was applied due to the composite characteristics of a target population after which, purposive sampling technique was applied. The questionnaire was the major instruments used for this study. The questionnaire was based on the objectives and research questions developed for the study. 400 questionnaires items were distributed to the people of Enugu State based on the sample size of the three local government areas selected to represent each senatorial zone.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this section the result of data collected were presented and analyzed in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses posed for the study. The interpretation of the exercise was also made to arrive at the findings of the research work. The research questions were presented and analyzed using frequency and percentage and in a Likert scale point while the hypotheses were tested with chi-square (X2) at significant level of 0.05.

However, it is important to note that a total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to the three selected local government, one for each Senatorial Zones in the State. Three hundred and fifty-six (356) copies were returned representing 89% of the total distributed copies of the questionnaire. While forty-four (44) were not returned representing 11% of the total distributed copies. Out of the returned copies forty-two (42) copies were condemned for improper completion by the respondents representing 10.5% of the total distributed and total returned copies. The remaining three hundred and fourteen (314) copies were used for the analysis, representing 78.5% of the total distributed and total return copies respectively. The raw scores gathered from the respondents' responses were assembled, tallied and their frequency and percentage worked out. The frequencies and percentages were used to present the research questions that guided the study. The research questions were presented in likert scale form. The three hypotheses postulated for the study were tested using Chi-Square(x^2) at significant level of 0.05.

Research Questions

Research Questions One: *Are there factors contributing to increasing poverty in rural areas in Nigeria?*

Table 3: Contains the summary of the responses on the factors contributing to increasing rural poverty in Nigeria.

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Perversive Corruption	179 57%	65 21%	13 4%	34 11%	23 7%	314 100%
Debt burden	157 50%	55 18%	28 9%	40 13%	34 11%	314 100%
Unemployment	144 46%	50 16%	32 10%	52 17%	36 11%	314 100%
Overdependence on oil	224 71%	47 15%	12 4%	21 7%	10 3%	314 100%
Lack of Political will	46 15%	219 70%	21 7%	17 5%	10 3%	314 100%
Ethno-religious conflicts	168 54%	55 18%	20 6%	43 14%	28 9%	314 100%
Poor social amenities	173 55%	55 18%	22 7%	51 16%	12 4%	314 100%
Lack vocational technical skills realted courses in tertiary institutions	202 64%	61 20%	26 8%	15 5%	10 3%	314 100%
Total	1293	607	173	273	163	**2512**
Percentage %	52	24	7	11	6	**100**

Source: Research Report 2023.

Table 3 above showed that 52% of the respondents strongly agreed that the factors contributing to increasing rural poverty in Nigeria include pervasive corruption, debt burden, unemployment, overdependence on oil, lack of political will, ethno-religious conflicts, poor social amenities, lack vocational technical skills related courses in tertiary institutions among others. 24% agreed, 7% don't know, 11% disagreed, and 6% strongly disagreed.

Research Question Two: *Are there challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria?*

Table 4: Contains the summary of the responses on the challenges ofimplementing SDGs in rural poverty reduction in Nigeria

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Endemic corruption	172 55%	62 20%	17 5%	34 11%	29 9%	314 100%
Lack of effective policies	120 38%	67 21%	44 14%	28 9%	55 18%	314 100%
Lack of accountability	156 50%	51 16%	25 8%	50 16%	32 10%	314 100%
Insecurity	164 52%	53 17%	37 12%	28 9%	32 10%	314 100%
Poor infrastructure	156	56	28	40	34	314

	50%	18%	9%	13%	11%	**100%**
Low participation of the rural people	168	55	20	43	28	**314**
	54%	18%	6%	14%	9%	**100%**
High rural to urban migration	224	47	12	21	10	**314**
	71%	15%	4%	7%	3%	**100%**
Total	1160	391	183	244	220	**2198**
Percentage %	53	18	8	11	10	**100**

Source: Research Data, 2023

Table 4 above showed that 53% of the respondents strongly agreed that the challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria include endemic corruption, lack of effective policies, lack of accountability, insecurity, poor infrastructure, low participation of the rural people, high rural to urban migration among others; 18% agreed; 8% don't know; 11% disagreed; and 10% strongly disagreed.

Research Question Three: *Are there SDGS based poverty reduction strategic frameworks in place for rural areas in Nigeria?*

Table 5: Contains the summary of the scores from the respondents on Strategic frameworks for SDGs based rural poverty reduction in Nigeria

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Job creation	156	50	25	51	32	**314**
	50%	16%	8%	16%	10%	**100%**
Integrated rural development programs	163	53	37	29	32	**314**
	52%	17%	12%	9%	10%	**100%**
Provision of basic needs	173	35	16	62	28	**314**
	55%	11%	5%	20%	9%	**100%**
Adequate budgetary allocation	55	120	44	66	29	**314**
	18%	38%	14%	21%	9%	**100%**
Full integrated of the Rural Poor in poverty alleviation policies/programs	120	67	44	28	55	**314**
	38%	21%	14%	9%	18%	**100%**
Total	667	325	166	236	176	**1570**
Percentage %	42	21	11	15	11	**100**

Source: Research Data, 2023

Table 5 above showed the 42% of the respondents strongly agreed that the SDGS based rural poverty reduction strategic frameworks in place for rural areas in Nigeria include job creation, integrated rural development programs, provision of basic needs, adequate budgetary allocation, full integration of the rural poor in poverty alleviation policies/programs among others; 21% agreed; 11% don't know; 15% disagreed; and 11% strongly disagreed.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: *There are factors contributing to increasing rural poverty in Nigeria.*

Decision Criteria: When the computed value of chi-square (X^2) is > the table value of chi-square (X^2), the alternative hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted while the null hypothesis (H_2) will be rejected.

Presentation of the chi-square result of hypothesis One
Table 6 Observed frequency for hypothesis One

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Total	95	79	61	51	28	314

Source: Field Work, 2023

Calculation of Degree of freedom (df)
Df = (R-1) (C-1)Where R = Number of Row in the contingency table; C = Number of columns in the contingency table
DF = (3-1) (5-1)= 2 x 4= **8**
At 0.05 significant level and 8 degree of freedom the table value of chi-square = 15.51
Computation of chi-square (X2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(0-e)^2}{e}$$

Where O = Observed frequency; e = Expected frequency

Expected frequency (e) is giving by $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

Where RT =Row total; CT= Colum total; GT=Grand total

Observed Frequency(o)	Expected Frequency(e)	(o-e)	$(o-e)^2$	$(o-e)^2/e$
314	312.01	2.01	4.0401	110.31

Source: Research Data, 2023

When the computed value of chi-square (X_2) is > the table value of chi-square (X_2), the alternative hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted while the null hypothesis (H_2) will be rejected. Therefore, since the computed value of chi-square (X_2) of 110.31 is > the table value of chi-square of 15.51, alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. The researcher therefore established that there are factors contributing to increasing rural poverty in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: *There are challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria.*

Decision Criteria: When the computed value of chi-square (X^2) is > the table value of chi-square (X^2), the alternative hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted while the null hypothesis (H_2) will be rejected.

Presentation of the chi-square result of hypothesis two
Table 6 Observed frequency for hypothesis two

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Total	65	109	51	61	28	314

Source: Field Work, 2023

Where R = Number of Row in the contingency table; C = Number of columns in the contingency table

DF = (3-1) (5-1) = 2 x 4 = **8**

At 0.05 significant level and 8 degree of freedom the table value of chi-square = **15.51**

Computation of chi-square (X_2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(0-e)^2}{e}$$

Where O = Observed frequency; e = Expected frequency

Expected frequency (e) is giving by $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

Where RT =Row total; CT=Colum total; GT=Grand total

Observed Frequency(o)	Expected Frequency(e)	(o-e)	(o-e)^2	(o-e)^2/e
314	194.642	119.36	14246.81	227.40

Source: Research Data, 2023

Decision Rule

When the computed value of chi-square (x_2) is > the table value of chi-square (X_2), alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Therefore, since the computed value of chi-square (X_2) of 227.40 is > the table value of chi-square of 15.51, alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. The study therefore establishes that there are challenges of implementing SDGs to reduce poverty in rural areas in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three *There are SDGS based rural poverty reduction strategic framework fin place for rural areas in Nigeria.*

Decision Criteria: When the computed value of chi-square (X^2) is > the table value of chi-square (X^2), the alternative hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted while the null hypothesis (H_2) will be rejected.

Presentation of the chi-square result of hypothesis three
Table 6 Observed frequency for hypothesis three

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Total	65	109	51	61	28	314

Source: Field Work, 2023

Where R = Number of Row in the contingency table; C = Number of columns in the contingency table

DF = (3-1) (5-1) = 2 x 4 = **8**

At 0.05 significant level and 8 degree of freedom the table value of chi-square = **15.51**

Computation of chi-square (X_2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(0-e)^2}{e}$$

Where O = Observed frequency; e = Expected frequency

Expected frequency (e) is giving by $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

Where RT =Row total; CT=Colum total; GT=Grand total

Observed Frequency(o)	Expected Frequency(e)	(o-e)	(o-e)^2	(o-e)^2/e
314	17.642	331.642	109986.42	14.40

Source: Research Data, 2023

When the computed value of chi-square (x_2) is > the table value of chi-square (X_2), alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Therefore, since the computed value of chi- square (X_2) of 14.40 is < the table value of chi-square of 15.51, alternative hypothesis (H_1) is rejected while the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. The study therefore established that there are SDGS based rural poverty reduction strategic framework in place for rural areas in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Rural poverty in Nigeria is a serious challenge that attracts the attention of the international communities because of its attendant conditions of deprivation and agony in a country often regarded as the wealthiest in the Sub Saharan Africa. To cushion this poverty condition, United Nation millennium declaration was made by world leaders in 2000. The declaration has committed the countries in the world to a universal partnership, with the major aim of reducing poverty within the deadline of 2015. Although progress has been made significantly in some countries, Nigeria has not made any meaningful progress in that regard due numerous challenges which some are earlier outlined in this paper. For a significant achievement of SDGs in rural poverty reduction in Nigeria, collective and concerted effort is needed to design a strong and reliable framework for a successful implementation.

Recommendations

a) Government should be more serious in dealing with corrupt elites by probing them, taking back their loot to the government and stopping them from holding any public office.

b) The Nigerian government should address the issues of poverty reduction programs through effective implementation of policies, creating conducive environment and rewarding good initiative.

c) Nigerian government should be proactive in addressing security issues, through applying advanced technology in managing security challenges, intelligence gathering sharing.

d) Government should intensify efforts on proving adequate infrastructure such as roads, schools, and health facilities to support successful implementation of poverty reduction programs.

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