

Social Protection Services and Socioeconomic Development in Nigeria: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: *The paper examined the effects of social protection services provided and their impact on the socioeconomic Development of the Citizens of Nigeria using a systematic review method. It uses thematic analysis to subject the information obtained from various secondary sources from which the findings are provided and inferences are drawn. The findings revealed that, social protection services in Nigeria are empowered by certain legal framework supported by the Sections 16 and 17 of Chapter 2 of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution hence, the Nigerian government continually indulged in the provision of several social protection services towards enhancing the socioeconomic status of the citizens of the nation. However, despite these, not much effect is felt on the socioeconomic development of the citizens because of the prevailing increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the nation. These inefficiencies are traced to several challenges such as inadequate funding, corruption/lack of transparency, over-politicisation of social protection programme, lack or inadequate data, the lack of synergy between the three tiers of government, and several others. The study concludes that the social protection services provided in Nigeria has failed to pose positive impetus on the socioeconomic development of the citizens. It further recommends that government should scale up coverage of social protection benefits because certain fragmented target population such as, a greater percentage of the poor, informal workers, displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and others are excluded from these services. Also, this could include the introduction of a universal child social protection benefit for children between age 0-5 and also social pension for elderly citizens of 70+ as foundation programs.*

Keywords: Social protection services, Social protection programmes, Socioeconomic development, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Socioeconomic development has become a major issue and has attracted concern in Nigeria due to the paradox of abundant natural resources and the persistent poverty, unemployment and inequality. At global level, statistics reveal that Nigeria was ranked 161 out of 189 on the Human Development Index (HDI) (Mienebimo, 2024) revealing a very poor state of development. Despite decades of increase abundant natural resources and the economic powerhouse of Africa, systemic and structural socioeconomic vulnerabilities prevail in the Nigeria economy, and the nation is being characterized with the persistent increase in poverty, unemployment and inequality which has created negative effects on the development of the nation (Akiwumi & Onyekwena, 2017; Ukorakpo & Itiveh, 2025). In Nigeria, poverty has increased from 40 per cent in 2018 to 63 per cent in 2026, with an estimated 129 million to 140 million that are classified as poor in Nigeria (Adediran, 2026). Unemployment rate has also increased, with misery index, which is the sum of unemployment and inflation rate standing at 38.3%, with a wide gap of inequality, depicting a very weak economy in Nigeria (Okamgba, 2026).

The concept of socio-economic development implies the improvement of the conditions of the citizens of the nation, couple with their wellbeing (Gboyega, 2023). Sanda (2015) asserts that socio-economic development could refer to as the transitional process sustaining improvement in the multifaceted human conditions, resulting from structural and functional transformations in the social, economic, political, technological spheres of human existence. It also implies the improvement in living conditions of citizens, particularly in line with the national goals and objectives (Soyombo, 2015). It also includes the improvement of standard of living and the quality of life of citizens, reduction of the level of unemployment; incidence of poverty; provision of housing; access to basic necessities of life such as good health services, potable water, education and electricity, and others (Egesi, Enwerem, Emenyeonu & Obi-Ifeanyichukwu, 2025). It also seeks to improve the personal physical security and the livelihoods citizens (Egesi et al., 2025). In summary, it encompasses the improvement of the standards of living, education, health, providing employment, and also ensuring the equitable distribution of resources.

Socioeconomic challenges are often interconnected and mutually reinforcing other various society's challenges such as conflicts, kidnapping, and so on (Musa, Enaberue, and Magaji, 2024), which according to Pettinge (2022) are the biggest block to achieving national development because they tend to dry up investment and resources due to their redeployment and use on unproductive means to try to cushion these conflicts. Moreover, the increasing poverty, unemployment and income inequality tend to continuously pose negative significant effects on the economic growth and development in Nigeria (Omiunu, 2014, 2019; Krokeyi & Obayori, 2020; Ukorakpo & Itiveh, 2025). Thus, undermining the capacity to access necessary basic needs of individuals like food, education, housing, and so on and in extension, it further disrupts the nation's economic growth (Mienebimo, 2024; Ukorakpo & Itiveh, 2025).

Nigeria does not have an enabling environment to enhance its socioeconomic development (Salaudeen & Terzungwe, 2017). Several factors have been identified to be responsible for this,

thus, affecting the socio-economic development of people and the nation (Edet et al., 2024; Egesi et al., 2025). For example, Okwuadimma (2023) noted that factors such as capital formation, power, economic system, human resources, technical know-how and education, corruption, political structure, culture, and others could pose significant effects on the socio-economic development of people and the nation. Gender, social and cultural constraints, poor enabling environment, and others are also major factors that affect socio-economic development (Eshiet, 2021).

Moreover, Gheţan & Paierele (2020) and Midgley (2020) revealed that the provision of social protection services could contribute to enabling the socioeconomic development of citizens and any nation. It promotes the development of the citizens and any nation through the reduction of poverty, fostering the sustainable economic development, and the promotion of social justice towards enhancing the administrative efficiency and integrating of the realization of national development objectives (Midgley, 2020). Social protection services have surfaced as a major policy instrument to tackle the increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality for an enabling socioeconomic development of citizens.

In addition, it tends to provide support to people, particularly the poor and the unemployed. It is also called social security and could explain the provision of benefits to individuals due to certain risks they faced across the life cycle such as unemployment, disability, maternity, poverty, and others (International Labour Organization, 2026). Social protection is highly contested, and could imply two essential public services which are the social security system and the system of social services (Shamil Briefs, 2024). The security system offers income transfers to people across the nation while the system of social services provides access to social work support and accompanying social care for individuals and families in a nation (Shamil Briefs, 2024).

Furthermore, social protection enhances human capital and productivity. Social protection is therefore essential for inclusive growth and sustainable development. Advancing social protection is also a condition for social justice and transformative change in the world of work and for the successful achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) which focus on “leaving no one behind” and the first three goals which are ‘No Poverty’, ‘Zero Hunger’ and ‘Good Health and Well Being’ strongly demonstrate the recognition of the effective provision of social protection as a veritable instrument for controlling and cushioning the increasing poverty, unemployment and inequality in Nigeria (Plagerson & Ulriksen, 2015; Liadi & Animashaun, 2023). The International Labour Organization (2026) provided nine branches of social protection services and these include health protection, sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, old-age pensions, employment injury benefits, family and child benefits, maternity benefits, disability benefits and survivors’ benefits.

In addition, Liadi & Animashaun (2023) highlighted several examples of such social protection policy which includes COPE conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme, subsidised maternal and child health care (MCH) provision and Community-based Health Insurance Scheme (CBHIS).

Others include child savings accounts, disability grants, health waivers, education support such as provision of free school uniforms, nutrition support, and others. These are provided by the federal and state governments, government ministries, departments and agencies. In addition, several other programmes such as CCTs for girls' education, HIV and AIDS and orphan and vulnerable children (OVC) programmes, provision of nutrition, health and education support, and others are provided by various other donors (Hagen-Zanker & Holmes, 2012). Also, the United Nations has spent approximately \$2 million on the joint programme on social protection in Nigeria which was implemented at both the federal and state level to provide various social protection services for citizens such as cash transfers, capacity building, health insurance, operational and overhead costs (Premium Times, 2022).

Moreover, in Nigeria, social protection policy has been a major discussion under concern since 2004, but has not resulted in any positive significant level of implementation and success (Hagen-Zanker & Holmes, 2012). Thus, with the continuous increasing of poverty, unemployment and inequality, it could be affirmed that Nigeria has not been able to use the provision of social protection services to enhance the socioeconomic status of its citizens. Despite the fact that, social protection services serve as a powerful instrument to reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality towards contributing to socioeconomic development of the nation, the nation is still lagging behind in the provision of such services such as supporting household income, cash transfer provision, supporting domestic consumption, thus affecting the socioeconomic development of the citizens and the nation at large.

Drawing from the sustainable development goals 1, 2 and 3, with the poor impact and effectiveness of social protection services in Nigeria, and the resultant increase in poverty, unemployment and inequality of the nation, Nigeria could be lagging behind in the achievement of the sustainable development. To this end, there could be need to further explore how social protection services could be used to enhance the socioeconomic development of Nigeria, vis-à-vis the reduction of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the nation. Therefore, this study focused on exploring the social protection services and its resultant effects on the socioeconomic development in Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions would drive the study:

- i. What are the various social protection services that are provided for the development of the citizens?
- ii. How does these social protection services affect the socioeconomic development in Nigeria?
- iii. What are the major challenges that have posed significant negative effects on social protection services on socioeconomic development in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several indices have been used as development indicators to reveal that the socioeconomic development of Nigeria is very weak. For example, Nigeria was ranked 16th of 179 countries and remained among the least 20 percent of countries with a very low Global Fragile Index, and also its Global Peace Index ranked 143rd out of 163 countries (Omisakin, 2023). It was also ranked 161 out of 189 on the Human Development Index (HDI) (Mienebimo, 2024). This reveals a very poor state of socioeconomic development in Nigeria. The level of poverty, unemployment and inequality are also very high in Nigeria (Mienebimo, 2024) thus revealing a very poor socioeconomic status among citizens and in Nigeria. There is also the interconnection among the increasing poverty, inequality, and unemployment in Nigeria. For example, poverty and inequality could serve as significant predictors of unemployment and there could be a positive correlation among unemployment, poverty, and inequality (African Development Bank, 2020). Drawing upon the intersectionality theory, such intersectionality among unemployment, poverty, and inequality could further aggravate the poor state of socioeconomic development of citizens in the nation in the long run (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). Thus, Camara (2022) admonished that poverty, and inequality are major dimensions of poor socioeconomic status of citizens in Nigeria and are further intersected by several other factors like location, ethnicity, age, gender inequality, and so on. This reveals the compounding socioeconomic state of citizens in Nigeria.

Therefore, to enhance the socioeconomic status of citizens, successive governments have tried to put in place numerous and different social protection programmes (Omisakin, 2023). According to FAO (2014), social protection programmes include the provision of social welfare, social assistance, social insurance, labour market intervention and human resource development, social safety net, social services, and others. Social welfare is an organized function that could be designed to enable citizens, families, group of individuals and communities to be able to cope with the various social problems associated with the changing conditions of the economy. It tends to play a germane role in the contribution of effective mobilization and the deployment of material and human resources of the country to better deal with various social requirements of change successfully, thereby enhancing the elastic success and participation in nation-building.

Social assistance is provided and used to alleviate or reduce poverty and could be delivered in cash or in kind. Social insurance serves as a contributory programme that could be designed to assist households against the sudden reductions, particularly in income among citizens. Labour market intervention implies the provision of certain labour market measures described as specific public interventions, particularly in the labour market that is aimed selectively favouring particular groups in the labour market. Such labor market program are certain active interventions such as training and skills development, employment counseling, and others that tend to provide certain level of protection for the poor who at least are able to work and are the active workforce of the nation labour force.

Social safety nets include non-contributory transfer programmes provided through various donor aid, government, NGOs, private firms, charities and information household transfers to prevent the poor and vulnerable individuals to shocks and poverty, thereby preventing them from falling

below certain poverty level. Social services are general social services provided by the government towards assisting to better improve the living standard of the citizens.

The social protection programmes that have been provided by Nigerian governments are social insurance, which cuts across the provision of Contributory Pension Scheme and the National Health Insurance Scheme towards handling the vulnerabilities associated with old age and illnesses; social assistance, which include the provision of non-contributory programmes such as school feeding programme and cash transfers; and providing a better labour market policies such that addresses the issue of National Minimum Wage, and several others (Omisakin, 2023). However, these have yielded little or no success, reasons attributed to several issues that tend to serve as major challenges such as increased financial exclusion, short-term nature of social protection and poor discontinuity potential particularly by successive governments, low receptiveness of social protection initiatives at the sub-national level, increase informal sector and vulnerable employment, as they account for over 70 percent of total national employment level. Thus, Omisakin (2023) argued that social protection programmes in Nigeria is inadequate, thereby reflecting in the poor living standard of the citizens and the poor coverage of certain segments of the Nigeria population such as the retirees (7.8 percent), the persons with disabilities (0.1 percent), and vulnerable groups (0.2 percent), and others. This could pose severe negative effects on sustainable development of Nigeria in the long run. Thus, the need to explore the various social protection services that have been provided towards enhancing the socioeconomic development of citizens and also examine the elastic challenges that have posed significant effects thereby hindering the effectiveness of the various social protection services in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This systematic review method was deployed in this paper, and focused on the use of several materials and information obtained from secondary sources including journal articles, books, and several online materials. Other information and materials used are News, Magazines, among others, particularly those that tend to address the subject matter of the paper. Moreover, a year range between 2015 and 2026 was used to draw an inclusion criteria for the materials and information used in this paper hence, others below the year range 2015 were excluded from the systematic review process as to provide a better and quality analysis of the research questions.

Also, the article deploys the use of Cochrane reviews style which has been the mostly used for systematic review study to better review materials and information obtained from secondary sources. In addition, the PICOS framework (Richardson, 1995), was also deployed in the searching process and represents:

P – The Problems of interest, which in this article is the poor socioeconomic status of citizens in Nigeria

I – The Intervention, include the necessary provision of social protection services,

C – The control (Not applied in this article)

O – The Outcome(s), include achieving and enhanced socioeconomic status in Nigeria which include the reduction of poverty, unemployment and inequality among the citizens.

S –The Study type: The types of studies and materials adopted in this systematic review include quantitative, qualitative and review studies. Also, News, Magazines, Websites of organization such as United Nation, World Banks, and others are also of relevance.

Also, Google, Google scholar, Semantic Scholar, and RefSeek were major search engines used to obtain information and materials used in this review article, with selected and choice of queries supplied and used for retrieval process. Despite the magnitude of information and materials obtained through the resultant searching process, only few (only eight) articles, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria were selected and used to achieve the objectives of this article and also to achieve a quality outcome that could be reliable to inform policy. Also, information was grouped into important themes, particularly following the research aims and objectives hence, a thematic analysis was used to subject the selected materials and information from the secondary sources to analyse towards achieving the major goal of the article.

RESULTS

The article used systematic review method to analyse the secondary information used for this study.

Social Protection Services Provided in Nigeria for the Development of the Citizens

Oladeji (2021) examined the widening access to social welfare services provision in Nigeria, and narrated that several governments have provided different types of insurance-based schemes such as the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), school feeding programmes, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), cash transfers, grants for children, public works programs such as pay-for-work and food-for-work, emergency relief, and others.

Etido Atakpa (2025), examined social policy implementation in Nigeria and stated that, social protection interventions and programmes in Nigeria are often driven by the government focusing on certain important policy frameworks and parameters. The Sections 16 and 17 of Chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria make it clear that the state governments should provide the citizens with maximum welfare, happiness and freedom on the basis of equality of status, equality of opportunity and social justice. In addition, the States are required to provide certain resources such as food, shelter, care and pensions for old age, sick benefits, living wage, good welfare to persons with disabilities. Therefore, successive government administrations have endeavour to devise and implement several social protection programmes and strategies towards reducing the increasing rate of poverty on citizens of the nation.

Onwuamaeze (2025) highlighted that the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Professor Nentawe Goshwe Yilwatda, stated that approximately 16 million vulnerable Nigerian citizens have been provided with several social protection services ranging from pension scheme,

Nigeria Social Trust Fund protecting workers with work-related injuries or deaths, the Industrial Training Fund supporting the youths with skills, training and job placements, provision of health insurance scheme and others.

The African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (2026) explored the achievement of inclusive and sustainable social protection programme in Nigeria, and identified that Nigeria is still lagging in the provision of social protection programmes to its citizens towards developing their socioeconomic status, and noted that four levels of social protection exist, and include the protective, preventive, promotive and the transformative measures. For the protective measures, relief from deprivations such as the provision of disability benefit, social pensions, particularly for the elderly, poor, orphanages, enhancing internally displaced persons camps, and others are provided towards the protection of the income and consumption of certain households. Such support is provided through the provision of social assistance programmes, which inculcates the use of cash transfers, in-kind transfers, waivers of fee to be able to support access to certain basic and social services, and several others. The preventative measures tend to assist in averting certain deprivation such as in the provision of formalized pension systems, health insurance, benefit for maternity, unemployment, and others. This prevents citizens and households from being a victim of poverty in the future and could come in the like of the provision of support as programmes for health insurance, subsidizing risk mechanisms, and others.

Promotive measures focus on improving the real incomes and capabilities of citizens, particularly through the provision of microfinance, school feeding and others, and help promote the ability to engage in various economic productive activities that would create positive resonance on household's incomes. Examples include the provision of public works employment schemes, transfers or subsidies in agricultural inputs to farmers, and so on. The transformative measures focus on addressing social concerns with respect to social equity and exclusion through the provision of certain regulatory framework that addresses protection of certain group that are socially vulnerable, which could include persons with disability, domestic violence victims, individuals living with HIV/AIDs, and others. To this end, this measure tends to focus on addressing the issue and challenge of social inequalities and discrimination in the society.

Etido Atakpa (2025), revealed that several preventive social protection programmes were provided to Nigerians during the era of President Goodluck Johnathan's regime, which include social insurance packages serving as premium waivers, services, health insurance, subsidised risk-pooling instruments like cooperative, and the provision of basic services, particularly at the local and community levels. Others include the National Social Investment Programme, Nigeria's Economic Growth and Recovery Plan (AGRP) 2017–2020, national school feeding programme, N-power scheme, conditional cash transfer programme, Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme, and others. These social protection programmes were delivered on a large scale through the use of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), which was introduced at that time, immediately after the fuel subsidy removal in January 2012. The SURE-P social protection programmes encompass the provision of maternal and child health

programme, assisting in community services, mass transit programmes, employment schemes, several vocational training, among others. An analysis of the SURE-P programme revealed that, from 5 major employment generation schemes, which are the employment of Community Health Worker, Graduate Internship Scheme, Community Services Women and Youth Empowerment Project, Technical Vocational Education and Training Project and Youths Employed by the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency, it revealed that the programme assisted in employment generation for citizens of Nigeria with 164,193 Nigerians benefiting from the scheme (Etido Atakpa, 2025).

The African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (2026) highlighted that several social protection programmes have been provided and include the provision of Vitamin A supplementation programme, Universal Basic education (UBE), National Programme on Immunisation, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Pension scheme, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF), National Health Insurance Scheme(NHIS), National Emergency Agency (NEMA), and the MDG/Debt Relief Gain (DRG). These social protection programmes involved the provision of direct cash transfers and conditional grants, Public Workforce (PWF), Community and Social Development Programme (CSDP), Child Development Programme (CDGP) and the Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO). Also, the N-Power, Home Grown School Feeding Programme, Enterprise and Empowerment Programme, the STEM Bursary Programme targeted at assisting 100,000 tertiary students studying courses in Education, Science & Technology, Engineering & Maths were also major social protection programmes in Nigeria provided for the citizens. However, despite these social protection programmes, more Nigerians are plunged into increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality, depicting that the nation and its citizens have not been able to enjoy the full benefits of these various social protection programmes.

Social Protection Services and Socioeconomic Development in Nigeria

Omiunu (2018) examined the relational effect of intellectual capital management, which in this present study could imply the provision of social protection services that could enhance the human and labour resources of Nigeria and how this has affected the economic development of the nation using secondary quantitative macro and micro data for several databases, and affirmed that Nigeria still operates a quasi-information society, meaning a fake information society, and that despite the increase in economic growth as announced in various sources, the Nigeria economy has failed to develop, or rather has failed to impact people at the grassroots hence, poor socioeconomic status with increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Oladeji (2021) examined the widening access to social welfare services provision in Nigeria, and narrated that the several insurance-based schemes that have been provided by government have been found to be very inadequate to serve the population from the 774 local governments in Nigeria particularly due to the ever-increasing growing population, weak socio-economic growth and instability, increased poverty, inequity and instability.

Sani, Yavala & Edward (2022) did an empirical analysis of the various social protection programme for poverty alleviation in Nigeria, and found that, since the inception of the social protection policy in 2016, a significant amount have been invested in achieving the objectives, ranging from N261.65 billion in 2010 to N1.26 trillion 2021, but the rate of poverty continue to increase on a daily basis depicting the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the programme in meeting its major objective of reducing poverty in the nation. The finding of Sani et al. (2022) further showed that government expenditure on social protection programme does not show a statistically significant relationship with per capita income (poverty) in Nigeria.

Etido Atakpa (2025), revealed that despite the several preventive social protection programmes, it could only cover as low as only 5 per cent of the population that are supposed to benefit from it in the nation revealing a gross lagging behind in meeting the citizens needs through the various social protection services. This inadequacy also reflected the inadequate coverage for distinguished segments of the Nigeria population such as persons living with disabilities (0.1 per cent); vulnerable groups (0.2 per cent); and retirees (7.8 per cent).

The African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (2026) highlighted that several social protection programmes have been provided for citizens but the nation is still lagging in the provision of social protection programmes that would effectively develop the socioeconomic status of people in the nation as the citizens have not been able to enjoy the full benefits of these various social protection programmes.

The Open Government Partnership (2026) revealed that despite the elastic investment in Social Protection in Nigeria, there is still increase rate of multi-dimensional Poverty in Nigeria, and significant gaps still persisting in the provision of social protection services.

Challenges affecting Social Protection Services on Socioeconomic Development in Nigeria

Etido Atakpa (2025), revealed that several challenges affect the provision of social protection services in Nigeria and include inadequate funding, corruption/lack of transparency, over-politicisation of social protection programme, lack or inadequate data, and the lack of synergy between the three tiers of government.

The African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (2026) highlighted that despite the various social protection programmes in Nigeria, the rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality is very high in Nigeria, depicting that the nation and its citizens have not been able to enjoy the full benefits of these various social protection programmes, due to the increasing rate of misconception, poor implementation and corruption. In addition, resource constraints, poor policy coherence and sustainability, personnel and institutions inadequacy, high policy makers and citizens ignorance, particularly with regards to the utility of social protection to reduce poverty, promote equity and justice.

The Open Government Partnership (2026) posed that several challenges such as the continuous increase in the level of poverty, weak coordination and working synergy, particularly among various implementing agencies of the social protection programmes, poor access to education, health, and nutrition are major issues affecting the effectiveness of social protection programmes in the nation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The paper examined the effects of social protection services provided and their impact on the socioeconomic Development of the Citizens of Nigeria using a systematic review method. The findings revealed that several social protection services were provided by the Nigerian government focusing and empowered by the Sections 16 and 17 of Chapter 2 of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution. Despite these several social protection services provided, not much effect is felt on the socioeconomic development of the citizens because of the prevailing increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the nation.

This concurs with the findings of and buttresses the reason why Omisakin (2023); Mienebimo (2024) asserted that, at the global level, Nigeria is still ranked 161 out of 189 on the Human Development Index (HDI) revealing a very poor state of socio-development. This also supports the findings of Hagen-Zanker & Holmes (2012); FAO (2014); Akiwumi & Onyekwena (2017); African Development Bank (2020); Premium Times (2022); Liadi & Animashaun (2023); Ukorakpo & Itiveh (2025); Okamgba (2026) and Adediran (2026), that despite the numerous social protection services provided in Nigeria, there are still persistent increase in poverty, unemployment and inequality creating negative impetus on the socio-development of the citizens and the nation. Hence, despite the possibility of the provision of social protection services to influence the socioeconomic development of citizens and any nation as stated by Gheţan & Paierele (2020) and Midgley (2020), that of Nigeria has not been able to present significant impetus on the citizens' socioeconomic development. This justifies the assertion of Salaudeen & Terzungwe (2017) that Nigeria does not possess an enabling environment that could foster citizen's socioeconomic development. Drawing from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this could pose an ineffectiveness in handling the increasing level of poverty, unemployment and inequality in Nigeria as affirmed by Plagerson & Ulriksen (2015) and Liadi & Animashaun (2023), thus could make the nation to lag behind in the achievement of the SDGs, particularly at the regional and global levels.

These inefficiencies could be traced to several challenges such as inadequate funding, corruption/lack of transparency, over-politicisation of social protection programme, lack or inadequate data, and the lack of synergy between the three tiers of government. Also, high rate of misconception, poor implementation, resource constraints, poor policy coherence and sustainability, personnel and institutions inadequacy, high policy makers and citizens' ignorance, and others were also identified as major challenges hampering the potential influence of the social protection programmes on the socioeconomic development of the nation. This concurs with the

findings of Eshiet (2021); Okwuadimma (2023); Edet et al. (2024); Egesi et al. (2025) revealed that several factors such as corruption, political structure, culture, and others tend to pose negative effects on the impossibility of the social protection services to influence the socio-economic development of the people in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The paper examined the effects of social protection services provided and their impact on the socioeconomic Development of the Citizens of Nigeria using a systematic review method. In conclusion, empowered by the Sections 16 and 17 of Chapter 2 of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution, the Nigerian government has in one time or the other provided several social protection services towards enhancing the socioeconomic status of the citizens of the nation. However, despite these several social protection services provided, not much effect is felt on the socioeconomic development of the citizens because of the prevailing increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the nation. These inefficiencies could be traced to several challenges such as inadequate funding, corruption/lack of transparency, over-politicisation of social protection programme, lack or inadequate data, the lack of synergy between the three tiers of government, and several others.

Recommendations

Several recommendations were provided from this article and include:

- i. There is need for government to promote inclusive economic growth, particularly in the provision of certain social protection services to the citizens of the nation.
- ii. Government should also scale up coverage of social protection benefits because certain fragmented target population such as informal workers, displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and others are excluded from these services. Also, this could include the introduction of a universal child social protection benefit for children between age 0-5 and also social pension for elderly citizens of 70+ as foundation programs.
- iii. The government should also expand the national social register using satellite data, mobile registration, and also community validation to be able to capture individuals who are missing from the previous data.
- iv. The government should increase social protection financing in the national budgeting inculcated into the creation of social protection fund.
- v. There is need for the public sector to also collaborate and partner with private sector for youth skills and health outcomes towards creating positive change.
- vi. The government and policy makers should ensure the need for establishing a social protection shock-responsive and adaptive, particularly for those who are involved in certain disasters such as floods, inflation, conflict, kidnapping, and so on that could repeatedly push households into grave poverty.
- vii. The government should provide a means for integrating the social protection provided with productive inclusion and jobs because the provision of certain social protection services alone may not be able to drive socioeconomic development if the beneficiaries

- lack certain access to markets, land, and skills. This could result in building human capital and local economies of the nation.
- viii. Government should need to provide a body and organization who will be fully responsible and empowered to provide such social protection services effectively to the targeted population. There should also be the need for training and deploying of community development officers in different ward and local governments to handle registration, grievances, and case related to management, particularly of resources and the process.

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