

Socio-Demographic Factors as a Determinant of Household Poverty in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper focuses on the socio-demographic factors as a determinant of poverty in Niger State, Nigeria.

Design/methodology/approach: Using a set of household data generated from a structured questionnaire administered on 519 households, in which 479 responses found suitable for the analysis, and Tobit regression analysis. Multistage sampling was used to obtain data from six local government's area of the state. The marginal effects of Tobit regression on each of the independent's variable were also identified.

Findings: Mean age and household size were 35.1 ± 11.1 years and 4.5 ± 2.2 years respectively. The results of the analysis showed that age, gender, household size, educational status, and health facility were the factors that significantly affected poverty in Niger State. The Tobit regression results shows that if household size increase by 1, poverty will increase by 0.7 per cent, also additional age by 1 year shows that poverty will reduce by 0.07 per cent.

Research limitations/implications: The results notwithstanding, policy measures that would reduce the poverty status of the heads of household were suggested.

Practical implications Findings can advise thoughtful stakeholders especially the government policy make to redesign favorable labor policies that will enhance local participation in the organized labor entwined with the increase of health care and education.

Originality/value: The significant value of the research refers to its focus on the understanding of the extent, nature, and determinants of rural poverty is a precondition for effective public action to reduce deprivation in the rural areas. Due to the fact that lots of researches in poverty has been conducted but least has been focusing the in depth analysis of household poverty, the paper provides an empirical investigation to confirm the significance relationships involved. This can only be achieved by examining the root causes of poverty among households that should be made through grassroots-level planning, thereby drawing roadmap that can mitigate extreme poverty and hunger in the country.

Keywords: Socio-demographic, Poverty, Tobit Regression, Niger State, Nigeria

Introduction

Poverty is a global phenomenon, countries in the world have put in different measures in other to reducing the level of poverty in their countries, but still there is a wide spread of poverty in the world. According to UNDP (2013), despite the greatest achievement in the reduction of poverty since the introduction of Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) by the United Nation (UN) in 2000, there is still a widespread of human poverty in the world. Africa is well known as the poorest continents on earth, it is reported that seventy-five percent of the poorest countries are in Africa. According to (Gallup World, 2013), the highest proportion of countries whose people are living in an extreme poverty were all in Sub-Saharan Africa. (World Bank, 2010), reported that population of African who are living on \$1.25 a day is 48.5 per cent.

This situation is not different in Nigeria, previous studies have shown that the country is suffering from poverty. (See, Balaogun, Yusuf, Omonana, and Okoruwa, 2011; Balogun, 2011; Ojimba, 2012, and Zaccheaus & Nwokoma 2012). This situation however, contradict the belief that the country is endowed with the enormous human and physical resources, it is even more worrisome that despite the vast human and material resources that were put in place to reduce the level of poverty and the various economic policies introduced by the government since the 80's, such as, Austerity Measure and Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), Directorate of food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Integrated Rural Development Projects, Better Life Program, Family Support Program, Mass Transit Program, National Directorate of Employment, Peoples' Bank, Family Economic Advancement Program, National Poverty Eradication Program, Subsidy Re-investment Program (SURE-P), poverty and the challenges that comes with it still persist. Report from the Human Development Report reveals that in ranking Nigeria is 152nd in Human Development Index with 0.504 and 54th with respect to human poverty index. Also, it is shown that Nigeria belong to one of the poorest countries of the world. Thus, making it the 22th poorest country in the world.

Evidence shows that there is a wide variation in the rate of poverty of the geo-political zone in Nigeria. Northern part of the country has witnessed the highest poverty rate, which Niger State, the study area belongs. Of the six geo-political zone, poverty rate in North East, North West and North Central was 35.6 percent, 37.7 percent and 32.2 percent in 1980 respectively, which increase to 77.5 percent, 78.1 percent, and 68.0 percent for North East, North West and North Central respectively in the year 2010. Niger State, the study area is part of North Central and it poverty rate as at 2013 stood at 49.6 percent. National Bureau of Statistic (NBS, 2014).

The causes of poverty in the State can be attributed to high level of adult illiteracy, lack of access to basic needs, such as, food, shelter, drinkable water, health, sanitation, epileptic electric power supply among others. Above all, agriculture is the main occupation of the people in the State, over 80 percent of the population are either on-farm or non-farm agriculturalists.

The effects of the increase in the rate of poverty in the state will lead to poor nutrition and physical health problems, which will eventually lead to malnutrition and starvation, infectious disease, mental illness and drug dependence related crime and violence, as well as increase in the rate of "Almangiri" menace.

Over the years, the Niger State government in collaboration with non-governmental agencies such as Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), and Life- Rehab, have at one time or the other developed and implemented several measures or program in reducing the level of poverty in the state. Measures such as housing scheme, transportation scheme, and Vision 3: 2020 among others.