

Individualism and Combating Poverty in Contemporary Nigeria: A Case Study of Bayelsa State

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rissj.v3i3.499>

| Tare-Ebi Warri¹ | T. Etchie Peter² | Frank Funkeye Sapele^{3,*} |
| David Okuwa Gogo⁴ |

^{1,4} Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State

² Political Science Department College of Education, Warri, Delta State

³ Department of Political Science, University of Africa, Toru-Orua Bayelsa State-Nigeria

*sapelefrank@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study is centred on individualism and combating poverty in contemporary Nigeria, using Bayelsa State as a case study. Poverty is widespread and the poor people are the hardest hit of the excruciating effects of the menace. Poverty is one of the major problems confronting the world and combating it has been a priority of government at all levels. Poverty remains the root cause of many problems in the globe such as wars, conflicts, environmental degradation, prostitution, malnutrition, illiteracy, human trafficking, political violence and different dimensions of crime in our society. This research views poverty firstly as an individual challenge and considers the "self" a major factor in combating it. It is a qualitative study which adopted the *ex-post-facto* research design and data were obtained mainly from secondary sources, while relying on the problem solving approach for the analysis of data. Findings in the study reaffirmed the multi-dimensional nature of poverty in line with the existing literature. However, the research proffered a new approach in fighting poverty in Bayelsa State, with an acronym of "ESCAPE" – Poverty, which can be adopted in Nigeria and the world at large. It is recommended in this study that individuals must accept responsibility and prove consistent commitment that is believed to be a better approach in combating poverty in contemporary times.

KEYWORDS

combating; *ex-post-factor*; individualism; poverty; self

INTRODUCTION

Combating global poverty and reducing it significantly is a key pre-requisite for the attainment of sustainable development. It is in line with this thinking that combating poverty featured prominently in the international quest and pursuit towards the realisation of sustainable development. Combating poverty is addressed in chapter 3 and principle 5 of the Rio Declaration of 1992. In the year 2000, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger was the number 1 goal of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as championed by the United Nations Organization (UNO). Following the expiration of the targeted date of the MDGs in the year 2015, the UNO came up with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and again, ending poverty in all its forms everywhere is the number 1 of the 17 goals.

The global fight against poverty seems not yielding the desired results. The United Nations (UN) acknowledged that by the end of 2019, the world had already missed the track of ending poverty in 2030, as the steady reduction in the rate of poverty for over 20 years was adversely affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic, which pushed an estimated 71 million people into extreme poverty in 2020 (UN, 2020). Global poverty rate rose in 2020



basically because of the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which exacerbated the problems of conflict and climate change, as about 120 million additional people are living in poverty, with the total number expected to increase to about 150 million by the end of 2021 (World Bank, 2021).

The World Bank defined extreme poverty as people living on or less than \$1.90 a day. Consequently, recent estimates show that the global poverty rate stood at about 9.2% or 689 million people live in extreme poverty. These global poverty data are relevant for academic purposes, they are however very controversial and cannot be totally relied upon in reality, especially in third world countries generally and Nigeria in particular as result of adopting different bench marks in the determination and measurement of poverty.

The poverty rate in Nigeria is dangerously alarming as close to half of the country's population live below the official poverty line, measured at N 137,430 per annum. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of poor Nigerians increased by two million people, which is attributed largely to population growth? With the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of poor Nigerians increased by seven million as the rate of poverty rose from 40.1% (82.9 million people) which is 4 out of 10 Nigerians in 2019 to about 42.5% in 2020 (NBS, 2020), and the number is estimated to rise by the end of 2021.

It is imperative to note that the official adoption of N137,430 per year as the national poverty line is worrisome, in view of the prevailing cost of living in the country. 137,430 per annum is approximately N 11,450 per month, which is an average of N382 per day. In reality, this amount is believed to be grossly inadequate for an individual to be considered living above a minimum poverty line. Added to the above is the fact that poverty is conspicuous and extremely glaring in Nigeria, and remains a major challenge in the country,

For the purpose of academic efficiency and effectiveness, this study focused on Bayelsa State, which has a poverty rate of 22.61% (NBS, 2020). The data show that poverty rate in Bayelsa is lower than the national figure of 40.1 %, the reality on ground paint a clear picture that portrays the alarming number of poor people in the state. This situation is more disturbing due to the fact that Bayelsa State is one of the richest states in Nigeria by virtue of the high deposit of crude oil and gas in its terrain which afforded the state and opportunity of receiving huge federal allocations on monthly basis, with 13% oil derivation fund and with a very small population of 1,704,515 people (NPC, 2006), estimated to be 2,277,961 in 2016 (NBS, 2017).

Poverty is believed to be the root cause of many social vices, criminal activities and related problems the society is facing today such as; wars and conflicts, prostitution, kidnapping, illegal bunkering, armed robbery, political thuggery, child labour, parental irresponsibility, human trafficking, street and corporate begging, child and maternal mortality, malnutrition, illiteracy and school dropout, environmental degradation, corruption, vote selling and buying, cultism and many others.

In the midst of all these poverty related problems bedeviling our society and the unimpressive results of combating it by government at all levels, the poor people seem adamant, hopeless and helpless and at best still blaming and waiting for government that does not really care much about the poor people. The gap between the rich and the poor between regions and population groups is still quite large (Dung, 2021) . If government has not made the expected headway in fighting poverty obviously, the big question in this study becomes necessary now. Is it rational for poverty stricken individuals to wallow continuously in poverty without committing personal efforts at reducing it?

In light of the analysis posited so far in this paper, individualism became an inevitable option in the fight against poverty. This is premised on the thinking that, firstly it is the



individual that is poor, who also suffers the most dehumanizing consequences of poverty, after which the aggregation of the number of poor people will translate to mean a poor family, poor community, poor region, and a poor country. Poverty has been a major global challenge and most likely to remain so now and in the nearest future. Therefore, the topic enjoys enormous literature dealing on the meaning, causes, measurement and solutions targeted at the reduction of poverty. However, the menace of poverty persists and the existing literature has not satisfactorily shifted the needed attention to the issue of self awareness and worth, especially within the context of Bayelsa state where poor people are fond of pointing accusing fingers at their parents, family relatives and the government for their poverty predicament, without considering an iota of the individual as an indispensable factor in combating poverty. Hence, this research is centered on filling the aforementioned gap yet to be adequately addressed for combating poverty in our contemporary society.

Generally, this research is aimed at constructing an approach on a dynamic of individualism for combating poverty in Bayelsa State. The specific objectives of the study as stated bellow are to:

1. Create an awareness and understanding of the combat against poverty firstly as an individual responsibility;
2. Expose and position the ability of individuals at the centre of the fight against poverty in bayelsa state;
3. Construct a paradigm shift of the over-dependence of poor people on family members and government and build a culture of self- reliance;
4. Stimulate the natural ingenuity and ability of poor people to take the bull by the horn in the fight against poverty through personal efforts and commitment;
5. Recommend individual centered approaches for combating poverty in the society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories are very important components in social science research and they are necessary in explaining and establishing the relevance of cause and effect relationship between variables in a given topic, thereby enhancing the understanding and clarification of a study. Therefore, this study adopts the culture of poverty theory, originally postulated by Anthropologist Oscar Lewis in 1959. The Culture of Poverty theory is an explanation that the persistence of poverty in a society is a reflection of the values of poor people, who are largely irrational in their actions and decisions. In explaining the culture of poverty, Lewis (1966) identified 70 traits that are characteristics of poor people, which includes among others their attitudes, values and character structure of the individual as factors responsible for perpetuating and causing intergenerational transmission of poverty in a society.

The central argument is that, the character and value of individuals experiencing poverty determine the perpetuation of poverty and the impoverished condition of people which in some situations is passed from one generation to another. People in the web of culture of poverty are not conversant with history, having a strong feeling of marginality, helplessness, dependency, powerlessness, inferiority and personal unworthiness (Lewis, 1998). The orientation of people, family and cultural backgrounds significantly affect the behaviours and attitude of poor people which causes their inability to escape poverty. The culture of poverty theory is relevant in this research because it provided a framework and relationship between the attitudes, value

Conceptualizing Poverty

The meaning of poverty remains controversial partly because of the lack of uniformity in the identification, definition and measurement of who is really a poor person between



international, national and regional environments. The issue is compounded by the multiplicity of the causes and approaches to combat poverty in the existing literature. Added to the above is the high level of illiteracy and ignorance among poor people and the differences of individual opinions on their understanding of a poor person in the society, to the point that some impoverished people will not accept that they are really poor. However, a careful attempt is necessary at this point in streamlining the concept of poverty for the purpose of this paper.

Poverty is a multi-dimensional and complex concept that portrays lack and deprivation in the contexts of financial, economic, socio-political, environmental and seasonal spheres that are interlinked and reinforced each other (Gweshengwe & Hasharia, 2020). A poor person is an individual that lacks inter-related abilities and capabilities needed to provide and sustain a minimum living standard in a community. The multidimensional nature of poverty is seen from the perspective that there is always an inter-play of a complex web of factors that determine and perpetuate poverty.

The complexity of defining poverty brought to the fore the concepts of relative and absolute property. Relative poverty is seen as a measure of an individual level of poverty who has significantly less wealth than other members of particular society (Raywat, 2019). This conception of poverty is hinged on the belief that poverty has different levels and stages which can be graded comparatively. Absolute poverty is considered in terms of the inability of an individual to meet the minimum requirements needed to afford a basic standard of living (Raywat, 2019). Absolute poverty is concerned with the identification of a poor person who is unable to provide the necessary and indispensable means to live a minimum standard in a society. In its extreme form, poverty is exclusion, a situation in which an individual is deprived and unable to access and provide necessary needs to sustain a basic decent life.

Poverty is not only having very low income, rather it is about multi-dimensional deprivation which includes; “hunger, under nutrition, illiteracy, unsafe drinking water, lack of access to health services, social discrimination, physical insecurity and political exclusion” (Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2007). Poverty is a multifaceted condition that transcends not just having low income and inability to meet the basic necessities of life, it also involves deprivation, exclusion, lack and incapacitation in several related fronts. This explains that poor people are not just those captured and measured with income below a bench mark, rather poverty encompasses a complexity of intertwined denials an individual is subjected to by virtue of such state of impoverishment.

Poverty is also viewed as a condition of the lack of individual capabilities like education, health and skill to attain a basic standard of human well-being (Wagle, 2019). An individual is poor and remains in poverty if the victim fails to consciously utilise his innate capabilities through education, maintaining good health and acquiring skills necessary for survival in the present world.

From a general perspective, poverty can be conceptualised as a state of an individual being unable to reasonably afford the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education services and inability to actively participate in the social, economic and political components of society to be considered as meeting the minimum standard of living in a particular environment over a period of time. Despite the controversy in the conceptualization and measurement of poverty, the fact remains that poverty is one of the most difficult challenges the world is facing today and it is a reality that poverty exists, even in extreme form and in many situations, a poor individual can be easily identified. Consequently, what is paramount now is how to combat poverty in all its



forms in accordance with the position of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this paper, the approach is centered on the perspective of individualism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Individual and Poverty

Is Poverty Really a Choice of an Individual?

In all ramifications, it is rather unthinkable and very difficult to convince and prove beyond reasonable doubt that an individual will decide to be poor and remain perpetually in poverty. It is very uncommon for a poor person to accept that he chooses to be poor. But the culture of poverty theory argues that people are poor largely due to their attitude and behaviours, with crass displays that suggest lack of self-awareness and self-worth. It is posited that culture and behaviours produce processes and mechanisms that lead to the reproduction of poverty (Small, Harding & Lamont, 2010). Behaviour and poverty are interwoven such that individual actions induce poverty and poverty also reciprocally feeds back into behaviours thereby reproducing poverty intra- and inter-generationally (Brady, 2019).

It is more logical and reasonable to posit that being born as a poor individual is not a choice of the victim, but one that grows into adulthood and continuous life in a state of perpetual poverty can be blamed of making wrong choices that incentivises and sustains impoverishment which is linked to behaviours and attitudes. This is premised on the believe that man is naturally a rational being, therefore the irrational conducts of man that produces poverty can be described as matters of individual actions and choices. The ideology of individualism asserts the self-determination of man, where human beings are considered as free actors to make choices that have direct impacts on the course of their own unique destinies (Callero, 2009).

It is rightly argued that people are free, rational and autonomous, and that hard work, perseverance and smart choices (Eppard, 2016) significantly determine the success of individuals in a competitive society. Under the same conditions and circumstances, some individuals have recorded impressive success while others failed woefully. The explanatory factors are differences in behaviours, attitudes and choice of actions, because success or failure is a matter of choice (Eppard, 2016).

Feagin (1972) concluded that individualistic factors were more responsible in explaining contemporary poverty than structural factors. Individual decisions and choices are better explanatory factors for the causes of power and wealth in a society. Individuals are naturally unhindered to make choices and “map their lives as they choose, those that fail are personally to blame as the causes of success and failure lies within individual people” (Eppard, 2016). This assertion buttresses the thinking that, the combat against poverty must be rooted in the dynamic of individualism, because it is believed that one can only force the horse to the river bank, he cannot force it to drink water.

The prevailing rate of poverty in our society and the failure of government to freely redeem its part of the social contract in view of the existing structural defects in the political and economic spheres are enough signals that should propel individuals, especially the impoverished people to urgently take their destinies in their own hands, in order to escape from the gruesome effect of poverty since the reward we receive are proportionate to our efforts (Eppard, 2016) which greatly determine our state of poverty or otherwise.

Poverty and wealth are like two sides of the same coin and individuals are at liberty to make choices, as it is asserted that opportunities exist for all who want them, and hard work provides a surefire part of success (Eppard, 2016). While many people are



complaining in the same environment, others are succeeding through persistency and taking wise decisions. Self determination and personal responsibility are necessary prerequisite for one to combat poverty. Life rewards individuals what you give to it. Self reliance is not about bordering yourself on how to succeed, it rather entails believing in your innate potentialities and exploring all available opportunities to make life meaningful within the confines of your environment and abilities without waiting for external support, especially in our present society that is highly volatile and competitive.

The poverty theory of individual deficiencies posited that the individual is largely responsible for their own poverty situation (Addae-Korankye, 2019) as a result of exhibiting wrong attitudes, behaviour of dependency, failure to motivate personal human capital development and display of unimaginable ignorance and inferiority complex. The deliberate emphasis on individualism in the quest for combating poverty is based on the structural dysfunctionality on the economic and political spheres that has proven over the years without meaningful results in the drive towards eradication and/or reduction of poverty in the society. Expecting government and significant others to lift one out of an impoverished condition is just like wasting the natural potentialities imbedded in man to help himself. Everything about life depends on personal choice and determination, including the issues of poverty and success.

It is widely agreed that poverty is multidimensional, yet individual income and consumption expenditure in determining the rate of poverty in a society remains a dominant approach in the measurement and analysis of poverty. This is also an indication that poverty is largely connected to an individual and therefore combating it cannot be an exception. Poverty has a strong correlation with income (Bak, 2014), and income levels are largely measured from the perspective of the individual, with emphasis on the amount of money at the possession of a person to meet the minimum requirements for a standard living on daily/and or yearly basis. In this context, individuals are pushed to act on their own initiative to construct their own life-course (Layte & Whelan, 2001).

As a major concern of the international community, combating poverty is an indisputable requirement for the attainment of sustainable development. It is rightly argued that development must be people centered and directed at the fulfillment of human potentials and the improvement in the overall well-being of the people (Jaja, 2004). The personal fight against poverty reduction will translate to the global quest for the eradication or minimization of poverty which will further boost the drive towards the actualization of sustainable development. In contemporary development discourse, “what matters is not the things a person has or the feelings these provide – but what a person is, or can be, and does or can do” (Todaro & Smith, 2006). This perspective is anchored on the capabilities of an individual to help himself and contribute to the national and international pursued for combating poverty and the attainment of sustainable development.

The collectivity of individual efforts to combat for poverty is believed to yield better and faster results in the society. Therefore, self- awareness becomes an indispensable factor. Individuals must take full responsibility and consciously make wise and smart choices with persistency and determination to escape poverty through any legal means possible as opportunities are always available naturally and by human actions. It is asserted that set of behaviours and attitudes which rejects common societal norms like hard work, rationality and non-violent dispute resolution creates and perpetuate poverty in a society (Sario, 2019)

Causes of Poverty

The multidimensional and complex nature of poverty suggest that the conditions is caused by several related factors. Consequently, there is no single most appropriate remedy for combating poverty. However, understanding the individual at the centre of the fight against poverty in contemporary society, especially in Bayelsa State become important. It is imperative to pinpoint some root causes of poverty in our society. It is believed that the consequences of our choices will determine the part we wish to pursue in life (Sario, 2019). In light of the above and considering the peculiarity of our environment and prevailing circumstances, the following are some explanatory causes of poverty in the society.

1. **Wrong Choices:** Man is naturally free to make choices that determine his part in life. The structural constraints are artificial which are less powerful compared to the free nature of man. Individuals make series of choices in life and if we make enough good choices and avoid bad ones, we will typically end up in a reasonably comfortable situation (Sario, 2019) that will be meaningfully above the poverty line in a given society
2. **Lack of Jobs:** Unarguably, unemployment is one of the root cause of poverty in Bayelsa State. About 36.68% of the population in the state is unemployed (Varrela, 2020). Good employment is a key determinant of income which is a basic yardstick for the measurement of poverty. Many people are poor because they lack sustainable means of livelihood.
3. **Lack of Education:** One major root cause of poverty is lack of education, because if you are unable to read or solve basic mathematics, you will find it difficult to secure a job and therefore you will be poor (Hickman, 2015). It is important to make a clarification that not every person without education is living in poverty, but most of those in extreme poverty do lack basic education (Giovetti, 2020). Many of our people, especially youths, women and children lack basic education with proven competencies, hence they are in poverty trap.
4. **Large Family Size:** The incidence of poverty is noted to be higher among those with larger family sizes (Orbeta, 2006). There is strong correlation between high population and poverty, especially when there is no corresponding income in a family. The intergenerational culture of poverty, is highly linked with families that have large population, but lack sustainable means of livelihood. This is evidenced in our setting particularly the villages and communities where people without identifiable means of income gave birth to children and continue to wallow in abject poverty. Even individuals with income and large family sizes live in obviously impoverished conditions.
5. **Unproductive Lifestyles:** Increased productivity in all ramifications creates more avenues for income generation which is an antidote of poverty reduction. A lifestyle that is not productive is an invitation to poverty. When an individual displays a lifestyle that lacks creativity and productivity, the person is prone to poverty. The lifestyles of many Bayelsa youths depicts lack of productivity, hence poverty persists among the people
6. **Attitudes and Behavioral Defects:** It is argued that poverty is largely the result of social and behavioural deficiencies in individuals that make them economically unsuitable in a society (Addae-Koroankye, 2014). Attitudes and behaviours that are linked to poverty includes laziness, dependency syndrome, wasteful spending of income, lack of savings culture, idleness, disinterest in agriculture, lack of

entrepreneurial skills, pursuit of quick wealth, and other anti-social behaviours like drug addiction, cultism, excessive clubbing, illicit drug business, gambling etc.

Combating Poverty: Towards a Dynamic of Individualism Approach

Combating poverty remains one of the major challenges the world is facing in the 21st century. It is believed that a poor person is the direct victim of the effects of poverty. The multidimensional and complex nature of poverty explains the reality of the multifaceted and interrelated courses of poverty in any society. The structural deficiency explanations are very relevant in our setting and that is why the fight against poverty has not yielded the desired results. With the understanding that poverty is firstly an individual problem, this paper is now directed at suggesting an approach that is based on the dynamics of the individual with the acronym “ESCAPE” – poverty.

The construction of the above acronym is premised on the realities of the analysis of poverty in our society and the need to encourage and push the individual to lift himself out of poverty without necessarily waiting for government and family members. What does it take to ESCAPE – Poverty in Bayelsa State?

E-Entrepreneurship: The development of entrepreneurship skills is a key tool for the reduction of poverty (Hussain, Bhuiyan&Bakar). The wealthiest people in the world are business owners. Poverty can be drastically reduced if our people embrace business attitude, with perseverance and commitment, having a mindset of little beginning with a large future plan. Entrepreneurship is an indisputable factor that can lift many people out of poverty. Many individuals that have benefitted in accessing business loans and receiving starter packs could not effectively utilise such opportunities for lack of entrepreneurship skills. It requires personal efforts to learn such skills to succeed in life.

S-Saving Culture: “Opportunity presents itself for those who are ready” is a popular saying. Saving habits can be very effective way of ending poverty (Odhiambo, 2016). Government policies and programmes aimed at the reduction of poverty may not directly engage the people, savings involve a personal commitment of individuals that wish to overcome poverty. There is poor savings habits among the people which derails personal efforts against poverty. People spent all their income without planning for the future. The principle should be “spend what is left after savings” as the other way round is not proven to be effective in the fight against poverty. It is believed that if people adopt the money saving culture, the combat against poverty can be very successful. (Odhiambo, 2016).

C-Creativity: A creative person is a wealthy person. Wozniak, Co-founder of Apple submitted that “lack of creativity and lack of ability to think uniquely is indeed the main reason why there is so much unemployment” and hence poverty in the society. (Wozniak, cited in Deepa, 2018). Unemployment is one of the main reasons behind poverty. A creative mind can easily adapt to the ever changing world. Those that think outside the box can easily survive and evade poverty in an increasingly competitive world. People are therefore encouraged to be creative and recreate their world. Creativity also entails self-employment, self-reliant, development of talents for wealth generation and productivity in multiple spheres for the establishment of different sources of income in a volatile economic system

A-Agriculture: The SDG of ending poverty in all its form everywhere in the world significantly depends on agricultural practices. Embracing agriculture is a potent means of combating poverty. In this direction, commercial agriculture should be adopted as against subsistence farming. There is enormous wealth in agriculture, but our people distaste it for lack of knowledge. Agro-business is a money spinner in contemporary times. Avoiding malnutrition, hunger and maintaining good health are all benefits in embracing agriculture.



Agriculture promotes healthy nutrition and “health is wealth”. It is hard to discover any country that successively reduced poverty without the agricultural sector. For the purpose of this paper, individuals must genuinely engage in agricultural practices to escape poverty. Improved agricultural productivity increases incomes and food supply with high potential multiplier effects.

P-Population Control: Families with larger population are more susceptible to poverty than those with small population. The possibility is higher when the rate of production is not commensurate with the number of people in a household. The reproductive behavior among the people in Bayelsa State is a serious determinant of poverty as many young people without reasonable source of income are discovered to have children, thereby enabling transmission of poverty in a family. Healthy reproductive practices such as family planning can enhance the productive capacity of women. In our present circumstance, Thomas Malthus view on high fertility and poverty holds sway. Therefore, individuals should only give birth to the number of children they can comfortably cater and increase their productivity so as to avoid intergenerational recycling of poverty. Birth control must be considered firstly as an individual responsibility just like combating poverty. Fertility decisions are largely private issues (Merrick, 2002) and as such making wise decisions becomes important in the combat against poverty.

E-Education: Education is a great equalizer that is capable of opening doors to jobs, resources and skills and believed to be a globally-recognized solution to the cycle of poverty (Groveti, 2020). Education is capable of changing the value orientation of people and instilling in them attitudes of hard work, self-reliance, perseverance, and life coping skills. Education can enhance economic growth, reduce income inequality, develops skills and abilities that prepares people to face the challenges of life. Knowledge is power and the acquisition of it is a necessary requirement for combating poverty. Poverty is largely created by man and can be combated through individual human actions. “Access to education contributes to poverty reduction because an educate population is able to take informed decisions contributing to equal rights, economic and natural resources and to grant basic services for all men and women, including ownership and control over land and property, inheritance, appropriate new technologies and financial services (UNESCO, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Poverty is considered as one of the greatest challenges against the possibility of actualising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus combating poverty becomes an indispensable factor in the global quest for sustainable development. It is acknowledged that the world has already missed track of ending poverty in 2030, even though there was steady improvement in the reduction of global poverty in the last 20 years. It remains a fact that many people are still wallowing in abject poverty in the world. The situation is the same in Nigeria and Bayelsa State in particular.

The study admits the multidimensional and complex state of poverty as regards the causes and effects of the menace, which reinforces multifaceted approaches in combating it as portrayed in the policies and programmes of established institutions over the years. With the obvious competing challenges facing government at all levels and the inverse reduction of revenues as well as the structural dysfunctionality that collectively inhibited the needed success for combating poverty, the study focused on the perspective of individual dynamic in the quest towards poverty reduction. This assertion is premised on the centrality of the individual in poverty discourse, because individual poor people are aggregated to arrive at



a poor family, poor community, poor state and a poor country. Besides, the poor individual directly bears and suffers the excruciating effects of poverty.

Observing the character of people in Bayelsa State, one is tempted to conclude that the poor individuals choose to be poor. However, the fact remains that nobody chooses to be born in poverty, but to continue in poverty even in adulthood and for many years is largely determined by the daily choices and decisions individuals take in life that reflects ones state of poverty or success. Consequently, it is concluded in this paper that individuals are suitably positioned to achieve greater results in contemporary Bayelsa State for combating poverty.

Recommendations

Having examined poverty discourse from a global perspective and the dynamics of individualism, especially from the point of view of the behaviours and attitudes of the people in Bayelsa State, this paper recommends an individual centered approach with the acronym, “ESCAPE” – Poverty, believed to be a carefully constructed behaviour modification solution aimed at combating poverty in our society.

The alphabets in the construct, “ESCAPE” – Poverty carry separate, but interrelated meanings and interpretations as already discussed in the body of this paper, are all concerned with how individuals can make better use of their natural capabilities to lift themselves out of poverty and contribute positively towards the global quest of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. “ESCAPE” – Poverty stands for:

E – Entrepreneurship

S – Savings Culture

C – Creativity

A – Agriculture

P – Population Control and

E – Education

It is therefore recommended that individuals should embrace the philosophy of “ESCAPE” – Poverty as espoused in this paper by deliberately pursuing a part of success in life through hard work determination, self reliance and taking wise decisions, as well as changing their attitudes and behaviours to make life better for themselves and the society at large, with the conclusion that avoiding and escaping poverty is significantly a matter of personal choice. It is imperative to emphasise that just as the causes of poverty are multidimensional and interrelated, so also the solutions to combat it. An individual must be adequately educated to acquire relevant skills of entrepreneurship, savings, creativity, agricultural practices and relevance knowledge on population in order to make informed decisions for personal development and remain ahead of a reasonable bench mark of poverty in the society.

REFERENCES

- Addae-Korankye (2019). Theories of poverty: A critical review. *Journal of Poverty, Investment and Development*, 48 () 55-62. <https://doi.org/10.7176/JPID/48-08>
- Addae-Korankye, A. (2014). Causes of poverty in Africa: A review of literature. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 3 (7). www.aijssnet.com
- Bak, C. K. (2014). Social exclusion or poverty individualization? An empirical test of two recent and competing poverty theories. *European Journal of Social Work*, 18(1) 17-135. <https://doi.10.1080/13691457.2013/878316>
- Brady, D. (2019). Theories of the causes of poverty. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45: 155 – 175. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022550>



- Callero, J. A. (2009). *The myth of individualism: How social forces shape our lives*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, inc.
- Chronic Poverty Research Centre (2007). *Chronic poverty: An Introduction*. <https://odi.org>
- Deepa, A. (2018). Indian education system is lacking creativity, says apple co-Founder. RVCJ. <https://www.rvcj.com>
- Dung , D. H. (2021). Experience in Poverty Reduction in the World and Lesson for Vietnam. *Randwick International of Social Science Journal*, 2(2), 100-105.
- Eppard, L. M. (2016). Paved with good intentions: Individualism and the cultural reproduction of poverty and inequality. *The Official Journal of the North Carolina Sociological Association*, 14(2). www.ncsociology.org
- Feagin, J. (1972) "Poverty: we still believe that God helps those who help themselves". *Psychology Today*, 6 (6), 101-129.
- Giovetti, O. (2020). How does education affect poverty? It can help end it. Concern Worldwide US. <https://www.concernusa.org>
- Gweshengwe, B. & Hasharina N.(2020). Defining the characteristics of poverty and their implications for poverty analysis. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1768669>
- Hickman, B. (2015). Lack of education is the root cause of poverty. *Rochester Business Journal*. <https://rbj.net>
- Hussain, A., Bhuiyan, A. & Bakar, R. (2014). Entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation: An empirical review. *Journal of Asian Scientific Research*, 4 (10), 558–573.
- Jaja, N. R. (2014). *Capitalism and underdevelopment: The African experience*. Port-Harcourt. Nissi Books
- Layte, R. & Whelan, C. T. (2001). Cumulative disadvantage or individualisation? A comparative analysis of poverty risk and incidence. Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, Dublin.
- Lewis, O. (1966). The culture of poverty. *Scientific American*, 215 (4), 19-25.
- Lewis, O. (1998). The culture of poverty. *Society*, 35 (2), 7–9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF0283>
- Merrick, T. W. (2002). Population and poverty: New views on an old Controversy. *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 28(1), 41-55
- NBS (2017). *Demographic Statistics Bulletin*.
- NBS (2020). *2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria: Executive Summary*.
- Odhiambo, P. (2016). Saving as a method of ending poverty. The Commonwealth Youth Programme. <http://www.yourcommonwealth.org>
- Orbeta, A. C. (2006). The more the poorer: Why large family size causes poverty. Philippine Institute for Development Studies www.pids.gov.ph/
- Raywat, D. (2019). Defining poverty: A summary of competing models. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 2 (1), 17-21. Doi:10.31014/aior.1991.02.01.44
- Sario, C. A. (2019). The causes of poverty. Fraser Institute. <http://www.fraserinstitute.org>
- Small, M. Harding, D. & Lamont, M. (2010). Reconsidering culture of poverty. *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 629. 6-27
- UN (2020), UN report finds COVID-19 is reversing decades of progress on poverty, healthcare and education. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://www.un.org>.
- UNESCO (2021). SGG Resources for Educators – No Poverty. <https://en.unesco.org>
- Verrrella, S. (2020). Unemployment rate in Nigeria 2020, by State. <https://www.statista.com>
- Wagle, U. (2019). Rethinking poverty: Definition and measurement. Wiley Online Library. <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12192>
- World Bank (2021). COVID-19 to add as many as 150 million extreme poor by 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org>