
The Viability of Textiles in Alleviating Poverty in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The growing rate of poverty in Nigeria which is alarming and has led to increased social vices and antisocial activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery, pen robbery, murder, rape, looting, arson, ritual killings,, impersonation etc and has ultimately, resulted to insecurity of lives and properties. This development which portends a dangerous trend for all-round development of Nigeria, particularly, its economy, needs to be checkmated and developmental programmes put in place. It is against this backdrop that this paper is set to identify the causes and effects of poverty in Nigeria with a view to identifying a viable programme that can alleviate it and also pave way to further its all-round development, particularly, its economy. The paper also identifies textiles and places high premium on its viability in creating meaningful avenues for enhancing the general well-being and standard of living of the Nigerian masses. Textiles, historically and remarkably holds immense economic potential in alleviating poverty particularly in a country like Nigeria, where a significant portion of the population faces economic hardship with the situation getting worse on daily basis. This assertion is premised on the long historical record of textiles as a strong and major factor of economic development of some nations of the world such as Italy, England and France. It was also worthy of note that Nigeria's economy once prospered through contributions of textiles as there were flourishing textile mills across the country with booms of high magnitude then. The paper finally examines resuscitation of defunct textile industries for job creation, value addition to raw materials and export diversification, development of small and medium enterprises, consumer affordability and on-the-job Training and skill development as possible avenues through which the viability of textiles in alleviating poverty in Nigeria can be tested.

Keywords: Textiles, Viability, Poverty Alleviation, Economy, Nigeria, Mases, Industries, Enterprises

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1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty which can be seen as penury on the faces of individuals and be described as a retarding factor to the economic growth of the people appears to have caused a lot of setbacks to the socioeconomic life of a prayer percentage of Nigerians. Field investigations and practical experiences show that it is more pronounced in rural areas than the urban areas. Reasons are not unconnected with underdevelopment which is a common factor with many African countries, Nigeria inclusive.

The nature of global distribution of economy and wealth and the types of government practised in all countries bring in variations to the level and rate of poverty in such countries. Poverty has been a threat to individuals and to national development. Buttressing this fact, Okon et al (2013) assert that despite the fact that Nigeria ranks among the nations that are naturally endowed with both human and natural resources and also occupying an enviable position in the League of Nations, yet poverty strives the land. It is on record that converted efforts had been made to fight poverty, yet, majority of the people in the country are still feeling its impact and attendant consequences.

The textile industry has long been recognized as a significant contributor to the economic growth in various countries across the globe and by extension, has consequently, reduced their levels of poverty. Considering the vast population in Nigeria and its unencouraging state of economy, textiles can be seen as a promising avenue to reduce its level of poverty if given proper attention. This is because it holds immense potential not by addressing the challenges of unemployment alone but by also promoting local entrepreneurship, skills development, and international trade opportunities (Babatunde, 2016).

Nigeria has a strong agricultural sector, making it well-positioned to supply the raw materials required for textile manufacturing. By utilizing local resources, the textile industry has the potential to create rural employment and increase income levels, especially among small-scale farmers. Furthermore, investing in the textile sector can play a vital role in skill development and capacity-building within the workforce. Offering training programs and technical assistance can empower individuals from impoverished backgrounds, providing them with valuable skills and the opportunity for upward mobility. This in turn can improve their overall standard of living and help break the cycle of poverty. Regarding market demand, Nigeria has a large population and a growing middle class, creating a steady domestic market for textiles. Additionally, the textile industry can contribute significantly to export earnings, especially if competitive pricing, quality control, and product innovation are prioritized. By accessing international markets, Nigerian textile manufacturers can generate foreign exchange and stimulate economic growth (Ogunshina, 2013).

Having considered the significant roles of textiles to humanity, particularly, its contributions to economic development of some countries, many scholars did bare their minds on the interconnectivity of textiles and poverty reduction in Nigeria and it is pertinent to r take a cursory look at their views thus: Okafor, (2017) examined the link between Nigeria's textile industry and poverty alleviation and posited that the textile sector has great potential to generate income and employment opportunities, thus reducing poverty levels in Nigeria.

He emphasized the need for favorable government policies to support small-scale textile businesses and create an enabling environment for growth. Osuji and Okojie (2019) while exploring the role of micro and small-scale textile enterprises in poverty reduction in Nigeria submitted that the enterprises serve as a source of income for vulnerable populations, providr employment opportunities and contribute to poverty alleviation. They sought for increased support and capacity-building programmes to enhance the viability of these enterprises. Examining the impact of technological innovation on poverty reduction in Nigeria's textile sector, Adegbuyi, et al (2020) opined that embracing technological advancements, such as digital printing and mechanized processes could enhance the sector's productivity and competitiveness leading to poverty reduction.

This can be achieved through increased employment and income generation. While investigating the role of textile clusters in poverty alleviation in Nigeria, Olufemi, et al posited that clustering enables small-scale textile businesses to benefit from economies of scale, access to resources, and shared knowledge which translated into increased job opportunities, improved incomes, and reduced poverty levels within the clusters. While examining the roles of textiles in women empowerment in Nigeria, Agboola and Adekola (2016) described the textile industry as a sector that provides significant opportunities for women to engage in entrepreneurial activities to boost their economic independence and contribute to the overall reduction of poverty.

2. POVERTY, CAUSES AND ITS EFFECTS IN NIGERIA

Poverty

Poverty is generally viewed as a state of lacking of wants or insufficient resources or income to meet one's basic needs and live a life of dignity. It is a complex and multidimensional issue that encompasses both material deprivation and social exclusion. Several international organizations and institutions have provided their own understanding of poverty: The United Nations sees poverty as a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It signifies lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. The World Bank views it as "pronounced deprivation in well-being" and measures using the international poverty line, which is set at a certain income level below which individuals are considered extremely poor. The United Nations Development Programme (2015) takes a multidimensional approach to measure poverty, considering factors such as education, health, and living standards in addition to income. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) describes poverty as a "violation of human rights, denial of dignity and opportunity, and an unbearable stain on our common future."

Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

1. **Unemployment:** High rate of unemployment contributes to poverty as people cannot earn a living wage to meet their basic needs. Unemployment and poverty are strongly correlated. Those who are out of work see their means of subsistence dwindle as time goes on. As prices rise and quality of life declines, living conditions decline. A large portion of Nigeria's population does not have access to formal employment opportunities (Ucha, 2010). After graduation from tertiary institutions, many Nigerians find themselves jobless and scrounging for scraps. Even where they are qualified, the government is hesitant to hire them. Having connections to influential individuals in Nigeria is more important than having good qualifications when applying for jobs. Many highly competent people in Nigeria remain poor because nobody seems to care about their abilities and potentials. These individuals are not working and so, unable to earn desired money for their sustainability. Many government resources are being wasted because they are not being directed towards appropriate channels and there is no sufficient employment in the economy. Emerging unemployment rate is above 33.3% in Nigeria and yet, no tangible provision for redressing this ugly situation has been made by the government. The crime rate and violence in a country are exacerbated when people are poor due to unemployment. Crimes including armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, computer fraud, cyber crime, ritual killings and others are the go-to options for young people without jobs.

2. **Corruption:** Flagrant deviation from established economic policies coupled with incessant misallocation and misappropriation of resources within the government circle have fostered corruption within the government and society. This development is not good enough for the country's economy and it exacerbates poverty. The political system in Nigeria has been greatly disrupted by this practice, which has grown commonplace. The leaders routinely steal from the public coffers because they care for themselves only and so, prefer to enrich themselves at the expense of the common people. The corruption has infected every level of administration and the economy to the point where it has rendered everyone oblivious. Political leaders practically ignore the affairs and wellbeing of their people who elected them into offices (Ucha, 2010). It is obvious that all these contributed to Nigeria's poverty and crime rates.
3. **Rapid Population Growth:** Nigeria has one of the highest population growth rates globally. This has indirectly put immense pressure on available but insufficient social services and resources, thereby increasing its level of poverty. Poverty is a direct result of the strain that population growth puts on the food supply, the environment, and living standards. Overpopulation exerts pressure on food production, the environment, living standards, and, consequently, overt. Some of the main causes of a growing population are reduced mortality rates, immigration, lack of adequate fertility treatments in developing countries, poor contraceptive use, and poverty (Ojo, 2021). Increases in the growing population cause a high level of unemployment in urban areas and translate to poverty (Bala, Ibrahim, & Hadith, 2020). The study revealed that there is a correlation between population growth and poverty in African countries (Ojo 2021). The rate at which the population is increasing without any corresponding provision or proper plan contributes a lot to poverty in Nigeria.
4. **Limited Access to Education:** Lack of access to quality education prevents individuals from acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to secure better-paying jobs, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty. One of the most effective ways to alleviate poverty is by education. The World Bank states that education is the backbone of development because it supports democratic principles and social cohesiveness while also fostering economic development, national production, and innovation. When compared to other countries throughout the world, Nigeria's educational system can be seen as not measuring up because most graduates could not find job or establish themselves. Even, the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that "everyone has the right to education." appears unconcerned at Nigeria and other countries that failed to comply with this declaration because this right to education has been denied to many in Nigeria. Therefore, all these contribute to high level of poverty in Nigeria.

Effects of Poverty in Nigeria

1. **Health challenges:** Poverty leads to inadequate healthcare access and nutrition, resulting in higher rates of diseases, malnutrition, and infant mortality.
2. **Limited infrastructure:** Insufficient investments in infrastructure such as roads, electricity, clean water and enabling environment impede economic development and hinder poverty reduction efforts.
3. **Social inequality:** Poverty exacerbates social inequalities, leading to unrest, conflicts, and a sense of injustice within society.
4. **Limited economic growth:** Poverty prevents individuals from participating fully in the economy thereby reducing overall productivity and hindering economic growth.

3. VIABILITY OF TEXTILES IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN NIGERIA

Textile has the potential to alleviate poverty in Nigeria by creating employment opportunities, boosting economic development, and promoting local industries. Textile can indeed be a viable venture for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Okon et al (2013) opine that poverty in the generic term is a social, economic and political deprivation. From the view point of United Nations Development Programmes UNDP (2000), poverty is a state of deprivation of basic necessities of life. Akerele (2007) as referenced by Ogunshina (2013) states that poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being and comprises many dimensions which include low income and the inability to acquire the basic necessity and services necessary for survival with dignity. The country has a rich cultural heritage and a long history of textile production, which provides a solid foundation for developing the industry further. By promoting and investing in the textile sector, Nigeria can not only create employment opportunities but also generate income for many individuals living in poverty.



Fig 1: Apparel Manufacturing in Nigeria
Source: goolesearch

Here are some ways textile can help alleviate poverty in Nigeria:

1. **Resuscitation of Defunct Textile Industries for Job Creation:** The textile industry can generate a significant number of jobs, both directly and indirectly. According to the Cotton, Textile and Garment Sector Roadmap of the Nigerian Government, the textile industry has the potential to create about 2 million jobs in Nigeria by 2023 (Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment). The industry has a vast and wide scope to create employment avenues especially for women and youth who are obviously, more affected by poverty. In particular, several stages and units such as cotton cultivation, cotton harvesting, ginning, carding etc up to fabric manufacturing and designing are involved in textile production. Each of these units springs up a potential income-generating activity for those living in poverty.
2. **Value Addition to Raw Materials and Export Diversification:** Textile production can add value to the country's raw materials, such as cotton and wool, by transforming them into finished products for export. This can lead to the diversification of the export base, reducing reliance on oil exports.
3. **Development of Small and Medium Enterprise:** Textile production can provide opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to thrive. By establishing textile clusters or industrial parks, SMEs can benefit from shared infrastructure, access to finance, and training programs, enhancing their productivity and competitiveness. This can help lift many individuals and communities out of poverty.
4. **Consumer Affordability:** A thriving textile industry can lead to the availability of affordable clothing and textiles for the local population. This can reduce the cost of living for low-income individuals and families, potentially improving their overall standard of living.
5. **On-the-Job Training and Skill Development:** The textile industry requires a diverse range of skills, including weaving, dyeing, printing, cutting, and sewing. By investing in on-the-job training and skill development programmes, individuals can acquire the necessary skills to participate in the industry and secure employment opportunities.

However, it should be noted that achieving the full potentials of the textile sector in alleviating poverty will require a multi-faceted approach. This includes addressing infrastructure challenges such as inadequate power supply, improving access to finances for small-scale producers, availability of equipment and modern machinery, provision of good roads and effective road network, provision of enabling environment devoid of security challenges and implementing effective policies to protect the local industry from unfair competition among others. Overall, with the right support and investment, textile can be a viable and sustainable venture for poverty alleviation in Nigeria, contributing to economic growth, job creation, and improved livelihoods for its citizens.

4. CONCLUSION

Poverty has been seen as a global disease that cuts across the world. It is more pronounced in some areas than others. Nigeria happens to be one of the countries that are worst hit. This is an indication that it cannot be exterminated but be alleviated through a gradual process. The factors that bring about poverty in Nigeria need to be reversed and more attention focused on education and creation of job opportunities. By focusing on local resources, investing in workforce development and addressing the existing challenges, particularly by creating job opportunities within the numerous units or sections of textiles, the future of Nigeria n economy looks promising and hopeful.

Considering the above, there is no gayingsaying the fact that the viability of textiles in alleviating poverty in Nigeria appears to be one of the obvious ways to bail Nigeria out of the present socio-economic problems thereby making textiles as a problem solver and a significant contributor to economic development of Nigeria.

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