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Research Paper

Achieving the Poverty Reduction Targets of The Millennium Development Goals (Mdgs) For Enhanced Economic Empowerment Prospects In Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Social Sciences

KEYWORDS : Poverty, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Economic Empowerment, Poverty Alleviation.

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ABSTRACT

Poverty reduction is a core mandate of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of which Nigeria is a signatory. However, despite its perceived viability as an economic empowerment strategy, poverty still persists in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this study sought to determine the extent to which the MDGs targets on poverty reduction have enhanced poverty alleviation and economic empowerment prospects in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design. Four research questions and three hypotheses (tested at 0.05 level of significance) guided the study. Sample for the study consisted of 200 adult respondents drawn from thirteen (13) communities in Nsukka L.G.A. through purposive and stratified sampling techniques based on the 2006 National Population Census figures. Instrument for data collection consisted of thirty (30) item questionnaire developed by the researchers for the purpose of the study. The instrument was validated by experts and reliability co-efficient established. Data obtained were analyzed with mean and standard deviation for research questions and z-test statistic for the test of hypotheses. Findings among other things showed that although poverty persists in the area of study, the public still seem to be aware of the various strategies (in line with MDGs stipulation) put in place by government to enhance poverty alleviation and economic empowerment. Indeed, despite some perceived challenges, such as corruption, poor data base, multiple taxation, etc. respondents seem optimistic that poverty alleviation/reduction could still be achieved by the year 2020. Similarly, respondents did not differ significantly on the above views on account of gender and locationvariables. These findings were exhaustively discussed with far-reaching recommendations and policy implications for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment prospects in Nigeria. Conclusively, it was recognized that although attaining MDGs target on poverty reduction still faces challenges, it could still be achieved through concerted institutional efforts.

Introduction

Poverty has been generally acknowledged as a world wide problem affecting billions of people. It is estimated that out of the six billion population in the world 1.3 billion earn less than $370 a year. That is, about $1 a day or about N156.00 a day as at 2013 value of the Nigerian currency exchange rate (Ezeani, 2012). Indeed, most of the poor live in the developing world namely Africa, Asia, and Latin America respectively. In Africa, the World Bank report (2000) estimated that over 200 million people are wallowing in abject poverty. On the average 45 to 50 percent of sub-Saharan Africa live below the international poverty line (IPL) of one dollar a day. In West Africa where it is reported that almost all the countries including Nigeria are classified as either low income economies by the World Bank or low human development countries by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), human poverty still affects over 50 percent of the population (UNDP, 2000).

Poverty as a concept has received diverse definitional interpretation. The UNDP (2000) sees poverty as the denial of choices and opportunities most basic to human development to lead a long, healthy, creative life. It connotes lack of means to satisfy a person's needs for nutrition, housing, clothing and other essentials of life (Kakwenda, 2002). Onah (2010:27) in line with the above position, defines poverty as "a state of deprivation of basic elements necessary for human survival in the society…." These basic elements include clean water, good shelter, health facilities, good food, clothing, education, economic empowerment, natural rights, political liberty, civil liberty, property right and good governance (p.72). Poverty as a concept and index could be absolute, relative, subjective, dire, socio-cultural, urban, rural and endemic (Onah, 2010). Absolute poverty depicts a condition where the poor are severely deprived of basic needs of life (Giddens & Duneier, 2000). It is also a situation where the poor live below the poverty line (Haralambos & Heald, 2011:140). It is therefore in summary a state of absolute lack of resources to meet basic needs of life such as medication, clothing, shelter, good drinking water and food (Akpochafo, 2010; Dike, 2005). This type of poverty as reported by the World Bank (2002) and affirmed by Onah (2010) exists in Nigeria where majority of the population are unable to enjoy basic things of life such as good health, shelter, food, education, etc.

Relative poverty on the other hand is relative to some established standards and conventional living conditions in a society (Okeibunor, 2011). Thus, socio-economic inequality can induce relative poverty among different classes of people – the rich, the middle and the poor. Poverty is therefore a multi-dimensional concept which reflects economic, social, and political differences among others. The economic dimension of poverty embodies poor or inadequate state of financial savings and investment, shortage of employment opportunities, low productivity, uneven distribution of resources and so on (Onwujekwe, 2013).

Poverty has been on the increase in Nigeria since 1960 when political independence was attained. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Poverty Assessment Report (2002) by 1960, 15% of Nigerians were living in one form of poverty or the other. By 1980, the number of those living in poverty had risen to 28%. Similarly, World Bank Report (2002) showed that about 66% of the Nigerian population was living below the poverty line of 370 American dollars a year based on 1985 prices. This number declined to 54% by 1992 but poverty still increased between 1992 and 1998 due mainly to adverse policy changes (Ezeani, 2012). Indeed, Ezeani captured the steady increase in relative poverty level – non-poor, moderate poor and extremely poor between – 1992, 1996, 2009 and 2010 respectively (pp.36-38).

Recent evidence from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) as cited in Amodu, Mozobam & Onogwu (2012) supports the fact that poverty is on the increase in Nigeria. The authors further observed that based on the National Consumer Survey of 1999 nearly 70% of Nigerians were living in poverty with 43% in urban and over 50% in rural areas. Regrettably, Nigeria Living Standard

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Survey (NLSS) 2003/2004 which examined demographic, health, fertility behaviour, education, and skills/training, employment, time-use, housing and housing conditions, social, capital, agriculture, household income and consumption expenditure among other variables came to the inescapable conclusion that while in 2004 Nigeria's relative poverty stood at 54.4% by 2010 it has increased to 69% (Nigeria Living Standard Survey Report and Poverty Profile, 2010). In these two reports, the North-West and North-East geopolitical zones recorded the highest poverty rates in the country with 77.7% and 76.3% respectively in 2010 while the South-West geopolitical zone recorded the lowest at 59.1%. Among the states, Sokoto has the highest poverty rate at 86.4% while Niger had the lowest at 43.6% in the year under review (Nairaland Forum, 2013).

Although Nigeria is today among the topmost producers and exporters of crude oil, it is estimated that "70 percent of Nigerians still live in poverty with a low life expectancy of 54 years, infant mortality of 77 per 1000 births and maternal mortality of 704 per 100,000" (International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD), 2011:1). This prevailing and deteriorating economic situation in Nigeria seem to have encouraged human poverty (Oguonu, 2012; UNDP, 2003). Thus, using indicators such as per capita income, life expectancy, percentage of population living below the international poverty line of $1 per day, infant mortality rates, prevalence of malnutrition, adult literacy, access to portable water, availability of basic infrastructures and so on, Nigeria ranks below countries in Asia, Latin America, and other countries like South Africa, Indonesia, Brazil and Mexico (Okwesilieze, 2013; Central Bank of Nigeria, 2011). According to the World Bank (2010) Nigeria's per capita income now stands at $2.748 falling behind that of Ghana and Cameroon with $10.748 and $10.758 respectively. Thus, Nigeria by all standards is very poor.

Poverty without doubt is a world-wide phenomenon. This explains why it elicits world-wide or global concern especially with respect to its devastating economic, social, and political effects (Corbet, 2008). To underscore the international concern for the prevalent rate of poverty, the United Nations declared 1996 "International year for the eradication of poverty". Thus, October 17th each year has been set aside as "International Day for the Eradication of Poverty" world-wide. "The decades 1997-2006 was also declared "United Nations Decade for Eradication of Poverty"(UNO, 1997).

In Nigeria, both the government and civil societies have become increasingly aware of the poverty problem and situation. Indeed, several efforts have been made by various Nigerian governments, past and present towards poverty eradication or alleviation but apparently these have not yielded the desired results (Amodu et al., 2012). Operationally, poverty eradication or reduction can be defined as any deliberate policy or policies and processes which seeks to reduce or redress poverty in a community or society by raising the income generating capacity, savings and acquisition of productive resources of the poor (Okwesilieze, 2013). According to Chukwuma, Ngoka & Emehe (2003) poverty reduction programme are targeted at income or non-income poverty. Some of the popular tools in this respect include MDGs education, income redistribution, employment creation, vocational training, increased food production, provision of basic amenities, especially in rural areas etc (Ezeani, 2012). Poverty reduction efforts may also be aimed at removing social and legal barriers to income growth among the poor.

To alleviate poverty in Nigeria, various governments over the years initiated and implemented many poverty alleviation programmes. These include the Rural Poverty and Support for Increased Food Production, the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), the Nigeria Agricultural and Co-operative Bank, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution, Back to Land Programme, the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural infrastructure (DFFRI), Community Bank (now Micro Finance Banks), Better Life Programme, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), and the Family Support Programme among others (Ajege, 2002).

In spite of the introduction, adoption and implementation of the programmes indicated above, poverty has not only persisted but appears to be increasing and threatening. Thus, according to Chukwuma et al. (2013), the failure of the aforementioned programmes in reducing poverty in Nigeria coupled with other considerations compelled the government to adopt the Millennium Development Goals strategy in the year 2000. The MDGs originated from the Millennium Declaration by the United Nations (UN) in September 2000 at the Millennium Summit held in the United States of America. At the summit, the UN stipulated that by 2015, the eighteen (18) members of the organization should have met the eight (8) listed MDGs goals one of which is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The MDGs are geared towards Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger, Achieving Universal Primary Education, Promoting Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, Reducing Child Mortality, Improving Maternal Health, Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases, Ensuring Environmental Sustainability and Developing Global Partnership for Development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006).

Nigeria as a member of the United Nations keyed into the MDGs and subsequently produced a policy document called National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). According to Lawal (2007) NEEDS is aimed at outlining strategies and policies designed to promote economic growth. NEEDS as a Federal Government strategy is complemented by equivalent approaches at the State level by the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and at the Local Government level by Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS). The main goal of the NEEDS and the corresponding SEEDS and LEEDS is the reduction of poverty (Chukwuma et al., 2013). There was also the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which like the ones listed above were aimed at complementing government efforts at poverty reduction as stipulated by MDGs guidelines. NAPEP goals include training youths in vocational trades, to support internship and micro-credit as well as create employment in the nation.

Poverty as a world wide phenomenon could be influenced by certain indices or variables such as gender, location, population, educational level among others (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Scholarly opinions show that even though some of these variables are not in themselves causative factors, their recognized states or trends could engender poverty if not properly harnessed (Ogunleye-Adetona, 2010). Gender is generally perceived as a "socially constructed and socially learned behaviour and expectations associated with males and females" (Akpochafo, 2010). Indeed, all cultures accord certain rights and rules to males and females on the basis of some perceived social expectations which in turn could determine their levels of economic participation and access to income yielding activities (Ajege, 2002). Thus, the 1995 Human Development Report by the World Bank revealed among other things that of all the 1.3 billion peoples living with poverty, 70% are women. This position justifies the inclusion of gender as a possible moderator variable in this study.

Location (in terms of urban and rural indices) could also be associated with poverty trend in society. The Global Forum on Local Government (2010) posits that poverty and underdevelopment are conspicuously rural in nature especially in developing countries. Predictably, fighting poverty connotes "first and foremost transforming rural lives and livelihood" (Audinet & Haralambous, 2005:5). Location (rural and urban) is therefore perceived as a strategic variable that needs further verification in this study.

Many theories have been put forward to explain poverty and various ways of reducing or alleviating it. The Human Capital Theory (Ravallion and Martin, 1994) is one of such scholarly theories on poverty. This theory posits that most low income countries invest very little in human capital or health, education and skills of their citizens. Thus, increase in human capital has the potential of reducing poverty level. Predictably, the Human Capital theory suggests that education and training could be used as a vehicle to alter the inequality in the income distribution systems of a society. It argues that Human Capital Theory is a panacea for real and sustainable development which is capable of reducing poverty in the society. This is why and where the theory is relevant to this study.

It is pertinent to note that poverty level in society the remains high despite the application of different theories, policies and programmes. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty reduction is therefore one of the recent laudable initiatives its efficacy needs to be verified. This justifies the need for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Poverty level of citizens in Nigeria is high. Indeed, about 70% Nigerians live below poverty line and survive on less than $1 a day (Oyedokun, 2003). Significantly, majority of the population – about 80% live in rural areas where poverty has been the major hindrance to development especially with respect to access to social amenities, health facilities, quality education, decent and affordable shelter, food among others. Nsukka Local Government Area is one of such areas that share the above poverty indices. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a strategy of poverty alleviation is both laudable and development-oriented. This is because it does not only fast-track human survival and well-being but also very fundamental to development since it is detrimental to poverty and hunger (FRN, 2006).

However, the extent to which the MDGs targets on poverty reduction are being achieved need to be ascertained given the persistence of poverty (Since the introduction of this initiative) and the nearness of the 2015 target date coupled with other constraints associated with the policies and programmes contrived by the government to complement the MDGs such as NEEDS, SEEDS, LEEDS and NAPEP. Therefore, the extent of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals target on poverty reduction in enhancing economic empowerment prospects in Nigeria and Nsukka L.G.A in particular constitute the problem of this study.

The study therefore sought to:

(1) ascertain the strategies government adopted in achieving the MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A.

(2) find out the extent to which MDGs target on poverty reduction has been achieved in Nsukka L.G.A.

(3) determine the possibility of achieving the MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A. by the year 2020

(4) identify constraints that could hinder the achievement of the MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A by the year 2020.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

(1) What are the strategies adopted by the Nigerian government in achieving the Millennium Development Goals target on poverty reduction?

(2) To what extent has the Millennium Development Goal target on poverty reduction been achieved in Nsukka L.G.A?

(3) What are the possibilities of achieving the Millennium Development Goal target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A by the year 2020?

(4) What are the constraints hindering the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO1: There is no statistically significant difference between the scores of male and female respondents on the achievement of the poverty reduction target of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nsukka L.G.A.

HO2: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of rural and urban respondents on the achievement of the MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey design aims at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2006). The study was carried out in Nsukka L.G.A, Enugu State, South-East Nigeria. Local Government Areas that share common borders with Nsukka are Igbo-Eze South, Udenu, Igbo-Etiti, Uzo-Uwani, and Kogi State. All these communities are also collectively referred to as Nsukka. Basically, Nsukka L.G.A is made up of urban and rural areas facing poverty related challenges which the MDGs seek to ameliorate. Some of these poverty related challenges are unemployment, inadequate portable drinking water, inadequate health facilities, poor nutrition, high maternal mortality rate, and so on. Thus, the appraisal of the attainment of MDGs target on poverty reduction is very relevant.

The population of the study consists of the entire population of Nsukka L.G.A. based on the 2006 National Population Census; the total population of the area is 309,633, with 149,241 males and 160,392 females respectively (National Population Commission, 2006). The use of this population is justified because it comprises of males and females who by virtue of their age, marital status, and family orientations constitute responsible parents who cater for welfare of children and feel economic stress and strains associated with poverty. They were therefore better positioned based on maturity, experience, family orientation and occupational disposition to appraise (as respondents) the extent poverty reduction mandates of the Millennium Development Goals are being achieved to enhance economic empowerment in Nsukka L.G.A. Enugu State, Nigeria.

The sample size comprised of two hundred (200) respondents selected from the three zones namely Central, East and West using purposive and stratified sampling technique. The three zones make up the entire Nsukka L.G.A.

The instrument for data collection was a 30-item questionnaire (with vernacular version). It consisted of two sections namely

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A and B. Section A dealt with biodata of respondents while B was on the specific item clusters which reflected the aims and research questions of the study. The instruments was graded on four likert scale namely Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). However, some items were graded Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). These were also scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively depending on the positive or negative nature of the items and the anticipated responses.

The Questionnaire was face-validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Science Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who examined the relevance and correctness of the items. Their suggestions were taken into consideration in producing the final version of the instrument.

The internal consistency of the instrument was obtained using the test-re-test method. The questionnaire was administered on twenty (20) comparable respondents in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area, which was not part of the population and sample of the study. This was repeated after two weeks interval. Cronbach Alpha statistical technique was used to calculate the internal consistency of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient obtained was 0.840 while 0.842, 0.723, 0.665 and 0.774 were obtained for the first, second, third and fourth clusters respectively.

The instrument (questionnaire) was administered on the sample size (respondents) with the help of trained assistants and the researchers. The trained assistants were properly briefed on the purposes and other technical details of the study.

Data collected were analyzed with the use of mean and standard deviation for the research questions while z-test statistic was employed in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results or Findings

Findings of the study were presented in tables below based on the research questions and two hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What are the strategies adopted by Nigerian Government towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal target on poverty reduction?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent of awareness of poverty reduction strategies

S/N	Adopted Strategies	SA	A	D	SD	SD	$\overline{X}$	Decision
1	Creation of more industries to absorb many unemployed youths	130	63	6	1	0.57	3.6	Accept
2	Open apprenticeship scheme for training of youths to acquire job skills	124	64	8	4	0.67	3.5	Accept
3	Family support programme to reduce poverty	92	33	38	19	1.06	2.9	Accept
4	Knowledge/ information on National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)	130	30	45	22	1.08	3.07	Accept
5	Knowledge/ information on NAPEP as a poverty alleviation programme	96	31	54	19	1.06	3.02	Accept
6	Poverty alleviation grants or awards to citizens	93	37	49	21	1.06	3.4	Accept
7	Entrepreneurial training of the youths and students	83	50	45	22	1.04	2.97	Accept
8	Loans for farmers	61	28	78	33	1.09	2.58	Accept
9	Government assistance to widows both for their businesses and families	67	41	65	27	1.06	2.7	Accept
10	Knowledge/ information on the implementation of LEEDS at the LGA levels	80	39	56	15	1.01	3.02	Accept
11	Knowledge/ information on the implementation of SEEDS at state levels	80	37	73	10	0.98	2.93	Accept

The table above (table 1), shows the mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (SD) of respondents on the poverty reduction strategies adopted by the Nigerian government in achieving the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction. The table shows that the mean of all items (1-11) are greater than the 2.50 critical benchmark. Thus, the strategies adopted by government include creation of industries ($\overline{X}$ 3.6), open apprenticeship scheme ($\overline{X}$ 3.5), family support programme ($\overline{X}$ 2.9), knowledge/information on NEEDS ($\overline{X}$ 3.07), Entrepreneurial training ($\overline{X}$ 2.9), and so on.

Research Question II: To what extent has the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction been achieved in Nsukka Local Government Area?

Table II: Mean and standard deviation of respondents' opinions on the extent of achievement of Millennium Development Goal on Poverty Reduction

S/N	Extent of Achievement of MDGs on Poverty Reduction	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	SD	$\overline{X}$	Decision
12	Eradication of poverty with the implementation of SEEDS, LEEDS and NEEDS at the grass-root level	23	22	66	89	1.10	1.89	Reject
13	Families have benefited immensely from the family support programme	34	30	57	79	1.14	2.09	Reject
14	Youths have been empowered as a result of the introduction of NAPEP	20	25	60	95	1.12	1.83	Reject
15	Youths have been able to acquire skills for employment through the open apprenticeship scheme	32	25	56	87	1.15	2.01	Reject
16	Unemployment has been reduced with efforts of Nigeria Directorate of Employment (NDE)	42	9	72	77	1.19	2.08	Reject
17	Rural industries have been established to create employment opportunities	57	22	65	62	1.17	2.43	Reject
18	Majority of the youths in Nsukka L.G.A. are now employed	50	23	44	83	1.26	1.45	Reject

From the table II, it can be deduced that Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction has not been achieved in Nsukka Local Government Area ($\overline{X}$ 1.89, $\overline{X}$ 2.09, $\overline{X}$ 1.83, $\overline{X}$ 2.01, $\overline{X}$ 2.08, $\overline{X}$ 2.43, $\overline{X}$ 1.45) respectively.

Research Question III: What are the possibilities of achieving the Millennium development goal on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A by the stipulated year 2020?

Table III: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the possibility of achieving MDGs target on poverty reduction in 2020.

S/N	Possibilities of Achieving of MDG Target on Poverty Reduction in 2020	SA	A	D	SD	SD	$\bar{X}$	Decision
19	Family support programme will assist in achieving poverty reduction by 2020	79	30	73	18	1.05	2.85	Accept
20	In view of strategies developed by the government to eradicate poverty, the MDG will be achieved by the year 2020	75	46	67	12	0.97	2.92	Accept
21	Going by the strategies developed by the government to reduce poverty, every youth will either be self-employed or employed by the year 2020	79	43	66	12	0.98	2.94	Accept
22	Through the implementation of NAPEP as a poverty alleviation programme, the MDG on poverty reduction will be achieved by the stipulated year 2020	82	36	58	24	1.08	2.88	Accept
23	The operation of LEEDS at local level if well carried out, will be able to reduce poverty by the stipulated year 2020	85	34	62	19	1.05	2.93	Accept

The table shows that the scores of the respondents are strongly of the opinions that there are high level of expectations that the Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction could be achieved in Nsukka Local Government Area by the year 2020 ($\bar{x}$ 2.85, $\bar{x}$ 2.92, $\bar{x}$ 2.94, $\bar{x}$ 2.88, $\bar{x}$ 2.93) respectively.

Research Question IV: What are the constraints hindering the achievement of Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A

Table IV: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the constraints to poverty reduction

S/N	Constraints to Poverty Reduction	SA	A	D	SD	SD	$\bar{X}$	Decision
24	High and multiple taxation of individuals	85	49	42	25	1.06	2.97	Accept
25	Lack of sufficient awareness of the MDG in Nigeria	98	57	39	6	0.86	3.23	Accept
26	Corruption which includes misappropriation of resources and funds	84	64	46	8	0.86	3.13	Accept
27	The dependence of Nigeria on oil at the expense of other sectors of the economy	85	64	45	8	0.88	3.11	Accept
28	Insufficient and poor data collection for effective monitoring of the MDGs	90	52	48	10	0.93	3.11	Accept
29	Misappropriation of the oil wealth	84	60	44	12	0.93	3.08	Accept
30	Non-mechanization and development of agricultural sector	79	63	49	9	0.90	3.06	Accept

Information in table IV show that based on 2.50 critical benchmark, all the constraints listed are hindering the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction in Nsukka Local Government Area ($\bar{x}$ 2.97, $\bar{x}$ 3.23, $\bar{x}$ 3.13, $\bar{x}$ 3.11, $\bar{x}$ 3.08 and $\bar{x}$ 3.06) respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses I: There is no statistically significant difference in mean scores of male and female respondents on their awareness on the attainment of MDG target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A.

Table V: Z-test of difference between the mean score of males and females respondents

Gender	Mean	N	SD	df	Z-test	Z-tab	d-value	Sig - (2-detailed)
Male	2.9264	105	0.44946	198	-1.772	1.98	0.05	0.078
Female	3.0319	95	0.38308		-1.787			0.07

From table V above, the absolute value of Z-test is less than Z-critical (i.e. 1.772 < 1.98). Again, using the significant figure of 2-tailed test, the value (0.078) is greater than the α-value (0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected which shows that gender is not statistically significant in the awareness of respondents on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State Nigeria.

Hypothesis II: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of urban and rural respondents in the achievement of MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A.

Table VI: Z-test on difference in the mean scores of rural and urban respondents.

Location	Mean	N	SD	df	Z-test	Z-tab	d-value	Sig (2-detailed)
Rural	2.9007	123	0.39834	198	1.167	1.98	0.05	0.245
Urban	3.9351	77	0.45785		1.130			0.260

From table VI the absolute values of Z-test (1.167 and 1.130) are both less than the value of Z-critical (1.98). Similarly the significant value of the 2-tailed test (0.246 and 0.260), are greater than the α-value (0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This suggests that location (rural and urban) has no significant influence on the awareness of the respondents on attainment of the MDGs on poverty reduction in Nsukka Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from data analysis based on research question I show that certain strategies such as creation of more industries, open apprenticeship scheme, family support programme, national poverty eradication programme (NAPEP), entrepreneurial training among others could assist government tremendously in achieving MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. This finding is in consonance with the observation of Ajege (2002) that the public are fully aware of the strategies adopted by the government in reducing poverty even though it still seem to be persistent.

Finding in response to the second research question shows that government efforts through policy formulation, adoption and implementation to eradicate or reduce poverty in Nigeria have not yielded sufficient or commensurate results. Indeed, the reverse seems to be the case. This finding is in line with that of the Nigeria MDGs report (2007) which shows that poverty is rising significantly in depth and breadth both in urban and rural areas despite the adoption of different poverty alleviation strategies by the government. This position is further collaborated by Alimeka (2001) who argues that Vision 2010 Committee Report clearly showed that only about 40% Nigerians have access to safe water and that about 85% of the urban population live in single rooms with more than seven (7) occupants on the average. It is further argued that only about 42% of Nigerians have access to primary health care and the required vitamins (Onyejekwe, 2013). The implication of this is that despite the various strategies adopted by government in reducing and eradicating poverty, the rate of poverty is still alarming.

Findings on research question three indicated that despite the persistent level of poverty, the public are still optimistic that MDGs mandate on poverty reduction in Nsukka in particular and Nigeria in general is still feasible by the year 2020. This finding is in line with the views of Attah and Olowo (2007) which indicate that the shift in the initial target date for MDGs on poverty reduction from 2015 to 2020 is indeed very laudable. This suggests that even though most of the government policies are not yielding expected results now, the public still seem very optimistic that poverty could be reduced by the year 2020.

With respect to research question four, it was found that high and multiple taxation, corruption, dependence on oil revenue, insufficient and poor data collection as well as non-mechanization of agriculture could (and do indeed) hinder the attainment of MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A, Enugu State, Nigeria. Indeed, government cannot ignore those challenges if the prospect of poverty alleviation in Nsukka is to be achieved. This is in line with the views of Sorka (2003) "that in spite of all programmes and policies, they all failed principally as a result of corruption among other factors".

Similarly, findings with respect to test of hypotheses showed that gender is not a statistically significant factor influencing the awareness of respondents on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A. This means that both male and female respondents are aware of the programmes, practices and strategies adopted by the federal government at various times for the purpose of poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Findings with respect of hypothesis two showed that location (urban and rural) did not influence awareness of respondents on the appraisal of MDGs target on poverty reduction in Nsukka L.G.A. Thus, both rural and urban dwellers in Nsukka seem to be experiencing similar effects of poverty.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The following implications and recommendations based on the findings of the study are outlined as follows:

(1) The aim of adopting the Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction is to alleviate poverty. Thus, efforts should be intensified by all stakeholders to achieve the poverty related targets on MDGs in Nigeria. This will help to promote the prospects of economic empowerment of Nigerians and Nsukka in particular by the year 2020.

(2) Poverty reduction strategies in Nigeria should be inclusive, integrated and need-based. This position is reinforced by the finding that both rural and urban areas of Nigeria have peculiar needs which deserve functional policies and strategies. Indeed, poverty related burden in Nigeria affects both urban and rural and by implication literate and illiterate population. This implies that poverty in Nigeria is largely due to poor implementation of economic policies and not necessarily because of lack of education or location. This suggests that economic empowerment strategies are needed to reposition the economic development of Nsukka L.G.A. in particular and Nigeria in general.

(3) Millennium Development Goals target on poverty reduction in Nigeria is acknowledged as laudable. This is reinforced by the willingness of Nigerians to make the programme to succeed. This implies that government should be much more proactive in tackling poverty and other related issues.

(4) Constraint to effective implementation of the Millennium Development Goals target on poverty reduction seems largely bureaucratic or administrative. To stem this tide of event, efforts should be geared towards addressing issues which hinder poverty reduction. These among others include corruption, unemployment, lack of functional industries.

(5) Sustainable economic policies are achieved through persistent efforts and collective sense of focus or determination. Thus, government should ensure that the implementation of the MDGs target on poverty reduction at the grassroots level in Nigeria is effectively monitored for continuity and sustainability.

(6) Youths constitute one of the most vulnerable groups to poverty considering the high rate of unemployment today. Government should therefore embark on entrepreneurial training and economic empowerment programmes to enable the youths acquire requisite skills for self-reliance and self-employment.

Summary and Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it could be inferred that the level of poverty among people in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria is still very high. Thus despite the fact that people in the area are highly aware of the strategies adopted by government in enhancing poverty alleviation efforts, there seem to be no visible positive economic empowerment impact on the populace. This trend also suggests that attainment of MDGs target on poverty reduction is very negligible largely due to constraints such as corruption, poor data collection technique, non-mechanization of agriculture, among others.

However, despite these temporary set back, the public seem to be optimistic that MDGs target on poverty reduction for the purposes of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment could still be achieved by the year 2020 in Nigeria. This position is further buttressed by the fact that gender and location did not necessarily influence respondents' perception of the success or otherwise of the MDGs target on poverty reduction. In conclusion therefore, the findings of the study have showed convincingly that MDGs targets on poverty reduction have not been effectively achieved in Nsukka L.G.A, Enugu State, Nigeria. This situation could be attributed to certain constraints (already indicated above) which the people believe could be overcome through concerted efforts and strategies capable of helping the country to achieve poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of citizens by the year 2020.

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