

Mitigating Poverty through Islamic Ideals of Administration in Nigeria: A Paradigm Shift

Yusuf Kasim^{a&b}, Ahmad Zubir Ibrahim^b & Badariah Haji Din^b

^aDepartment of Public Administration, Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic Sokoto, Nigeria

^bCollege of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia

Email of corresponding author: abulmaryameduonly@gmail.com

Reducing poverty has been plaguing the Nigerian state for time immemorial, and a quite number of policies and programs were conceived, designed and implemented to some certain degrees through the ages, however, the efforts are almost fruitless as the incidence of poverty has been rising defying all the efforts at mitigating its menace. Accordingly, this paper aims at exploring a paradigm shift in the course of addressing the scourge of poverty in Nigeria. To achieve this objective a conceptual model for poverty reduction has been proposed by the paper with a shift from the conventional mechanism or perspective to a proposed ideal Islamic conceptual model which if adhered to would ensure comprehensive prosperity in Nigeria thereby ensuring poverty reduction and overall well-being of the Nigerian populace. In the proposed conceptual model this paper envisaged the role of Islamic ideals of governance and administration in the quest for a better society free of squalor, hunger, hopelessness and despair. Consequently, relevant literature were used to develop the conceptual model and a discourse on Nigeria's strive towards poverty reduction was carried out. Specifically, the conceptual model emphasized on amanah (trusteeship), adlah (justice), and istislah (public interest) as the mechanisms that would usher in and ensure prosperity and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Keywords: Poverty reduction, Amanah, Adlah, Istislah.

Introduction

Reducing poverty has been in the agenda of Nigeria government. It has been averred that, the rise in the menace of poverty in Nigeria has been steadily without a fall with 15% in 1980, 28% in 1980, and 66% by 1996 which indicated that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria assumed a wild-fire character (Anyebe, 2014). In the same vein, (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), 2015) using multidimensional poverty indicators observed that Nigeria had 53.3% as poverty incidence, 56.8% as intensity of poverty, with 32.8% as people in severe poverty, and 34.6% as destitute while 17.5% was identified as vulnerable and potential poor. The above submissions indicated that much is desired in assuaging poverty in Nigeria. This wholesome desire led to the designing and implementation of various poverty reduction policies and activities with envisaged objectives of lessening its effects on the citizenry, which by and large faced criticisms on corruption, mismanagement of resource, top-bottom approach and poor policies which have been seen as the banes to Nigeria's poverty reduction drive (Oshewolo, 2011). Therefore this piece proposes a shift from programme based poverty reduction effort to Islamic philosophy of public governance within the frames of Amanah, Adlah and Istislah.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the paper centers on an overview of the concepts of poverty, poverty reduction, amanah (trusteeship), adlah (justice), and istislah (public interest) which basically formed the framework for the discourse in this endeavor.

Poverty

Poverty has been conceived as deprivation that is related to economic resources considered crucial to meeting the basic necessities of life that include food, shelter, clothes and other essential services the make life meaningful (Handley *et al.*, 2009) . Contrary to the above conception (Akindola, 2009) argued that income measurement of what poverty constitutes

cannot explain poverty as human life need capabilities that enable the human person to pursue goals and meet the myriad of wants that becloud him or her, therefore, income component of poverty is one out of numerous elements that indicate a person is poor neglecting other important components that involve capabilities like education and skills, power, rights and liberties, and social inclusion. Similarly, (Jacob, 2015) stressed that poverty is a multidimensional concept that encapsulates various dimensions of deprivation which revolve around human capabilities, including food consumption and its security, health status, vocational skills and education, socio-economic and political rights, freedom of speech and expression, security of life and property, dignity and worth in the society, and responsible means of livelihoods. It has been argued that if well-being and quality of life are considered, importantly, security, self-respect, access to information, effective institutions and socio-political empowerment are as important as income to the poor (Robb, 2000). Therefore, it suffices to say that poverty involves an array of socio-economic and political dimensions.

Poverty Reduction

According to (Barder, 2009) poverty reduction symbolizes policy-action taken by the state to ensure redistribution of income in the society, provide public goods, and design socio-economic and political reforms that have positive impact on the lives of the people. Further to the above, (Loewen, 2009) asserts that poverty reduction depicts conscious effort being made by the state or government to enhance sustainability of livelihoods of the people which by implication improve their capabilities, income and general well-being. Conversely, poverty reduction has been adjudged to be a policy-action that government follows to change the socio-economic condition of the people particularly those identified as having issues with basic necessities of life. It represents efforts at enhancing social inclusion, economic empowerment and better living standard (Kanayo, 2015). Therefore, poverty reduction in this context is conceived as policy frameworks designed and implemented by government with a view to empower the poor socio-economically so that they live a decent life worthy of living and to give them a sense of belonging in the society.

Amanah (Trusteeship)

The concept of amanah is one of the basic principle of governance and administration in Islam which in conventional referred to trust meaning to keep intact what has been given to someone for custodianship (Samsudin & Islam, 2015) thus the need for trustworthiness (*amanah*). Trust in this regard means to fear Allah S.W.T and to be aware that Allah is ever seeing at all-times which should make an individual to hold the trust given to him and discharge his responsibilities with maximum diligence, accountability in compliance to both the injunction of Allah (S.W.T) and the rules governing the responsibility he has been entrusted with either by electorate or place of employment (Salleh & Mohamad, 2012). Accordingly, one fundamental feature of amanah (trust) in this sense is that human being as trust-holder is just a representative of Allah S.W.T (a vicegerent) who only do the biddings of Allah is running affairs of others (trusteeship) which by and large bring the notion of accountability in relation to stewardship (Triyuwono, 2004). To crown it all, Allah (S.W.T) in the holy Qur'an emphasized on the burden therewith attached to amanah which surely indicates that trust (*amanah*) is a burden and indeed something to be accounted for here and the hereafter. Thus, Allah S.W.A in the Qur'an says..., "Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to undertake it and feared from it, but man undertook it; surely he is unjust, ignorant" (Al-Ahzab, 33:72).

Adlah (Justice)

In a broad term, justice entails to render to everyone what is due him. However, far from that Islam transcends further in defining justice. It has been posited in Islam that to ensure a utmost justice there shall be proper allocation of what is due to everyone, compensate good for good

and exert appropriate punishment to a crime committed, therefore, anything contrary to the above cardinals amount to the opposite of justice, hence, injustice (Gonaim, 2016). Similarly, the assertion by Gonaim (2016) was in conformity with Qur'an 4:58 that...

Indeed, Allah has commanded mankind to render back the trust which he was bestowed with to the rightful owner, and when dispensing justice between the people (ummah) judge with justice, And surely excellent is that with which Allah admonishes you! Surely, Allah is All-Hearing and All-Seeing.

The above verse of the Qur'an literally and technically expressed *adlah* (justice) as a concept that emphatically deals with being trustworthy and honest in the socio-economic and political senses in which absolute fairness and equity in a social relation between and amongst individual without prejudice to either social, economic or political status, therefore, *adlah* (justice) in the Qur'anic literature abhors any act that breeds injustice, dishonesty and inequality in the society.

Istislah (Public Interest)

The notion of *istislah* (public interest) grows out of the need to ensure voice of the people thrive in the realm of policy making and implementation. It is a concept in the ideals of administration in Islam that aims at explaining the quantum of people choices in terms of public policy. In essence, *istislah* (public interest) preaches the supremacy of the overall need of the people in the society (Inayatullah, 2011). In a related view, (Hasan, 2015) conceives *istislah* (public interest) in Islamic sense as (*masāliḥ al-mursalah*). It captures the concept of "*lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār*" (no harm be imposed, and nor harm should be a penalty for an imposed harm).

The idea of public interest from the Islamic standpoint revolves around taking into account the overall welfare of the public in making decisions and implementation of programmes that are formulated for the public good in the socio-economic and cultural realms which by and large affect the public (Ajija & Kusreni, 2011). *Istislah* (public interest) in Islamic ideals or ethics of leadership encourages those at the helms of affairs to consult their people when making decision and that their inputs from the consultation must be allowed to bear or reflect in the decision-making.

It should be noted, at this juncture that, the above overview provides the framework for the discourse on the objective of this piece towards a paradigm shift in the art and science of poverty reduction from the conventional/capitalist perspective to that which is within the frame of *tauhid*-paradigm or Islamic perspective.

Nigeria' Poverty Reduction Efforts in Perspective

The alarming poverty trend in Nigeria over the years made government at different times to make efforts towards combating poverty in the country. The efforts have been categorized as the pre-structural adjustment, (PSA and post-structural adjustment (PTSA) eras (Oshewolo, 2011). The National Development Plans designed, as medium through which poverty was to be reduced, emphasized on, the real income of the average citizen, more even distribution of income among individuals, and socio-economic groups (Ukpong & Ibrahim, 2014). Similarly, the Military regime of General Gowon (1966-1975) launched the National Accelerated Food Production Program (NAFPP), however no tangible result was recorded. In 1973, the Federal Government created Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF) mandating the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) to implement. Furthermore, in 1976 the Military government of General Obasanjo, initiated Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) a programme designed to enhance food production and to trickle down development to the rural areas. However, OFN failed as corruption and inefficiency, misplacement of priorities amongst others deluded it (Oshewolo, 2011). Consequently, President Shehu Shagari's administration (1979-1983) came up with the Green Revolution Program, which was envisaged to promote food security, unfortunately like

previous programs, GR as it was popularly called, failed to realize its objectives (Adawo, 2011). In a similar vein, General Buhari's regime (1983-1985) introduced "Go Back to Land" programme which began to yield positive result in food production but short lived by a military coup which overthrew Buhari's military government. General Babangida on assuming power in 1985 came with series of programmes designed as steps further towards poverty alleviation in Nigeria, via Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which include Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), People's Bank, Community Bank. However, the resolve by the government to address the severe economic crisis in Nigeria in the early 1980s, the implementation of SAP sapped the people and worsened the living condition of the Nigerians (Oshewolo, 2011). Another, important milestone in the fight against poverty in Nigeria was the re-emergence of democratic governance in 1999. The new Administration under President Obasanjo attempted to reduce the 70 percent incidence of poverty in Nigeria therefore launched Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) in 2000, with a view to create jobs for the unemployed in Nigeria (Iheanacho, 2016). Not satisfied with the performance of PAP, the Federal government rebranded the program to National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) with an estimated ₦ 470 Billion in the National budget, but was able to get an approval from the National Assembly to commit ₦ 10 Billion to finance the Poverty alleviation program (Ogwumike, 2001), and a number of programmes and skills development activities were developed so as to create job and reduce poverty (Umukoro, 2013). Similarly, National Economic Empowerment & Development Strategy (NEEDS) was created by the Obasanjo's administration in 2004. The ideals of NEEDS were premised on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) , with core priorities on poverty reduction, education, sanitation, environment, energy and health, with about US\$1 billion expended since 2006 (UNDP, 2009). The NEEDS was designed to among other things make reforms in the fiscal and monetary policies, infrastructure development, entrench transparency, accountability, anti-corruption crusade and promote good governance (Bambale, 2011). The NEEDS philosophy was seen as a catalyst for poverty reduction and sustainable livelihood (Ekpe, 2011). However, the success of NEEDS was put to question, as problems similar to those that affected the previous poverty fighting policies and programs manifested (UNDP, 2009). Additionally, President Yar'Adua on 29th of May, 2007 launched the seven (7) points Agenda aimed at addressing some daunting challenges in Nigeria, with poverty reduction and food security at the center (Leke, Oluwasuji, & Simon-Oke, 2011). Unfortunately, the brain behind the Seven (7) point agenda could not live to see its realization, as death called on him on the 5th of May, 2010 and his successor President Goodluck Jonathan launched the Transformation Agenda in 2011, which was judged for marginal success on education (Oladimeji, & Opeyemi, 2013).

Regardless of the series of programmes initiated by previous Nigerian governments from independence to date issues of securing livelihood and eradication of poverty in Nigeria has become a worrisome affair (Adawo, 2011). MDGs report about Nigeria's ability to meet the target of halving the number of poor in Nigeria has shown that poverty incidence is on the increase in Nigeria with 61.20% in 2010 (UNDP, 2013). The National Bureau of Statistics put poverty prevalence for 2010, using USD 1 per (poverty line) day basis, at 61.20%, which revealed that the country suffered a relapse in its efforts towards meeting the MDGs target (NBS, 2015). In a similar vein (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), 2017) in its report on Nigeria indicated that the menace of poverty is still high with more than half of the population living in poverty and penury, for instance it has been shown by the report that Nigeria has a multidimensional poverty indicator (MPI) value of 0.303 which is very high, poverty incidence of 53.3%, poverty intensity 56.8%, with 17.5% as vulnerable which could plunge into poverty at any slight misfortune (shocks).

The above overview on the efforts made and being pursued by the Nigeria's government and the latest figures about the incidence of poverty has indicated that much is desired in addressing the

menace of poverty in Nigeria, particularly, a paradigm shift from the conventionally oriented poverty reduction measures to an Islamic ideals of governance and administration that aspire for public good, greatest happiness and comprehensive prosperity.

Proposed Conceptual Model for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria has been attributed not to the lack of human and material resources as it has been observed that Nigeria witnessed, over the years, an economic growth of rate 6% which is good enough for poverty reduction (Ajakaiye *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, Nigeria was indicated to have a GDP of \$521.8 billion and a GDP growth rate of 5.4% which is fair enough guarantee well-being of Nigerians (World Bank, 2014). It has also been posited that Nigeria has human and natural resources, specifically, a population of 173.6 million people and also one of the largest crude oil producer and gas reserve in Africa and the world in general, thus putting Nigeria at an advantage to successfully reduce poverty and ensure well-being of the Nigeria’s citizenry (World Bank, 2014). Accordingly, literature indicated that, the banes to the Nigeria’s poverty reduction or alleviation drive are mismanagement, corruption and poor policy related (Anger, 2010). It has been asserted that a lot of financial resource have been expended with a view to reducing poverty in Nigeria but no tangible result has been recorded (Ogwumike, 2001). It is therefore based on the postulations above that this piece suggests a paradigm shift from mere programme approach poverty reduction effort to a more proactive Islamic paradigm base on Islamic values of Amanah (trusteeship), Adlah (justice) and Istislah (public interest) as the mechanism for effective poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Consequently, in an attempt to find an answer to the daunting challenge of poverty in Nigeria this paper suggests that Islamic ideals of administration and public management should be adhered to by the leaders, managers and those saddled with the responsibility of ensuring public good, security and overall well-being to embrace ‘Tauhid Paradigm’s principles of public governance that sees leadership as trust which stewardship must be accounted for before Allah (SWA) in the hereafter. These principles of Amanah, Adlah and Istislah, basically, are the forms the mechanism for social-economic and political justice in the society therefore, if those in the position of authority in Nigeria apply and adhere to the three (3) principles in governance and sharing of the national resource surely comprehensive prosperity will flourish in Nigeria, thus poverty reduction will take place. These principles should be applied, as explained below, for poverty reduction to take place in Nigeria. The figure below is the proposed model for poverty reduction.

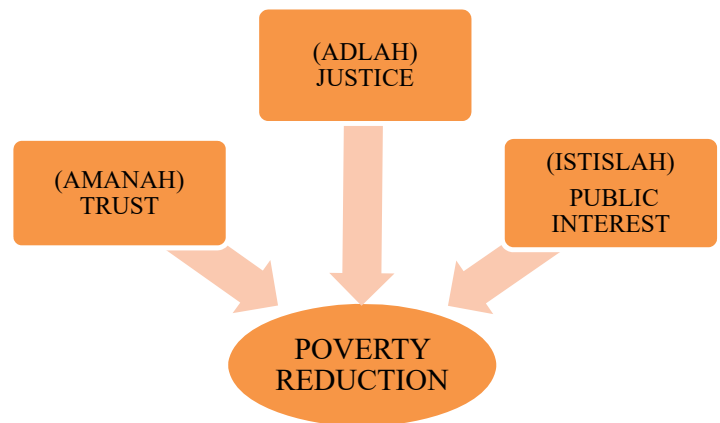


Figure 1 Proposed Conceptual Model for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

Conclusion

This paper concludes that if leaders and public managers in Nigeria in the area of policy making and implementation in the public and private realms embrace Amanah (trust), Adlah (Justice)

and Istislah (Public Interest) certainly human development and prosperity would thrive and poverty reduction would then be achieved. Therefore it suffices to say that embracing Islamic ideals of leader and management of public resources would ensure transparency, accountability, socio-economic justice and equality in Nigeria, and in the final analysis would guarantee poverty reduction in Nigeria.

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