ABSTRACT

THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA

by Roseline Jindori Yunusa

Nigeria has had a long fight with poverty since its independence, various policies and poverty alleviation programs have been put in place with the goal to eradicate poverty; however they have not yielded the expected result. The goal of this qualitative study was to investigate the claim by beneficiaries that poverty alleviation programs do not solve the poverty situation in Nigeria, in addition explore the reasons they gave for why programs have not been successful, and what could make them more successful. There is a general feeling of frustration and lack of confidence in government organized programs, stemming from policy formulation and in appropriately targeting the poor. The problems of poverty alleviation programs as seen by this study are that, policy makers have no knowledge about the culture of poverty or the emotional preparedness that people need to break family generation cycle of poverty and ultimately transition out of poverty.
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PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA

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Dedicated

To

The memory of my late father Dominic Vakkai

For influencing me to help people in poverty

And

To all the poor
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Introduction

This qualitative research study examines factors that influence the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Poverty is a problem that affects the individual both morally and psychologically, as well as the growth of a country. Since its independence in 1960 the government in Nigeria has had a long fight to end poverty. They designed and implemented several poverty alleviation programs to reduce the degree of poverty and improve the well-being of the citizenry. But the high level of poverty in the country does not reflect the effort and resources put into these programs. While it would seem like the Nigerian government feels it is doing its best in its fight against poverty by introducing different programs, citizens are frustrated with the situation and at the government due to unfulfilled expectation. The frustration has led to Nigerians having a skeptical disposition towards the government, (Magbadelo, 2003 p.71) and saying that the poverty alleviation programs are not working. Their reactions can be correlated to a World Bank report that was quoted as saying, “Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease, it attacks persons not only materially, but also morally; it eats away at one’s dignity and drives one into total despair” (1999, p.9). The feeling of total despair can be tied to the poor image about Nigeria around the world; part of this bad image can be traced to the pains experienced by the level of poverty in the society, fueled by the country’s large population, made up mostly of youths who have graduated from schools and cannot find employment, or those who are illiterate and have no job. The lack of jobs among the youth in the country has led to the prevalence of one of poverty’s by-products, which is high crime in society. The alleviation programs have not been successful. In order to understand why they have not been successful, we need to examine the history of the colonial period in Africa, and in particular Nigeria.

Colonization of Africa by Europeans

An understanding of the history of poverty in Africa would be impossible without first looking at the role of colonialism and how it has helped in under developing Africa. Every African society has undergone a transitional period that has influenced its development: wars were fought, land was sized, and people were killed, captured, and enslaved. Dopgima (2010) said, “it’s been 50 years since colonialism ended in Africa, but development prospects of the
continent has continue to stagnate,” (p.1). The World Bank, in a 2001 report described the African poor as the poorest of the poor. The concern or question is why a region so richly endowed with natural resources lives in such a state of poverty. According to Dopgima, poverty in Africa can be understood by looking at the institutions that have been put in place to control and continue draining the resources of the continent. In his book, “How Europe under developed Africa,” Walter Rodney writes about the loss of power by Africans to the colonial masters during colonialism as a form of underdevelopment, because, colonization took away the control over the socio-political and economic life created by the Africans during the pre-colonial period. The political power was passed into the hands of foreign overlords and African leaders were retained as agents of foreign colonial rulers, they merely served as puppets (Rodney, 1972).

The major economic activity of Africans, according to Rodney, was the arts and handicraft industries, and it is the major source of livelihood for Africans. The colonial masters did not develop the arts and handicraft industries, choosing instead to introduce the farming of coco and cotton that were more beneficial to them. In spite of the attempts to move away from the art and handicraft industries, they still survived the colonial period. This greatly affected the political economy of Africa (Rodney, 1972). According to Rodney, the destruction of the economy of many countries in Africa started at that period, and continues through foreign bodies like the IMF, World Bank and the policies they impose on African countries. Therefore, poverty eradication in Africa will have to involve the understanding of the roles that these foreign bodies play in terms of support, policies and resources.

In an effort to understand the foundation and continued growth of poverty in the continent of Africa, and Nigeria in particular, this researcher carried out this exploratory study on poverty alleviation programs by interviewing the beneficiaries of such programs, otherwise known as participants, to hear their views about poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. The researcher took notes during the interviews. Audiotape recorders was not used, because given the culture of the society, it was likely that people would not be comfortable speaking on tape, for the fear that they might be victims of future uses of the recording. This research has three main purposes: (1), to bridge the gaps between program planning, implementation and execution; (2) to offer solutions for more effective poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria; and (3), to examine
whether poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria are designed or carried out with knowledge about the culture or hidden rules of people in poverty.

The first guiding assumption of this thesis is that there seems to be a wide gap between policy formation and implementation of poverty alleviation programs, and its actual achievement. It seems that government efforts on programs are not effective, and not much has been seen as actual benefit to the poor. The second assumption is that the government seems to lack proper understanding of the culture of poverty, and how to work with people in poverty, the lack of knowledge on the part of the government is affecting government policy formation and proper implementation of poverty alleviation programs. To have a better understanding about poverty and the reasons for the limited success of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria, the researcher will be looking at the data from interview conducted with beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programs, and to understand from their perspectives on why poverty alleviation programs have not been successful.

**Research Question**

This study will address the following questions from the beneficiaries’ perspectives;

- Why have poverty alleviation programs not been successful in Nigeria?
- What could make poverty alleviation programs more successful in Nigeria?
- Are poverty alleviation programs really a solution to the poverty situation in Nigeria?
Literature Review

This section will examine the definition of poverty generally, poverty in Nigeria, as well as poverty alleviation programs and their impact in Nigeria, and how the programs have fared so far. It will also take a look at privately organized poverty alleviation program, and their success rates in the country. Data cited in this section are based on available data, and may be conflicting because of the lack of a unified data base in the country.

**What is Poverty?**

The definition of what constitutes poverty differs from one country to another; the general consensus is that poverty is a relative term, and consequently its meaning and parameters or standard of measurement vary from one place to another (Okosun et al 2012). One common feature is that it involves a lack of the basic means of survival (Macpherson and Silburn, 1998 p.17). For example, in Nigeria, poverty is more than “lack of adequate income, but a combination of many forms of deprivations that together allow human capabilities to go unrealized” (Akindola, 2009). On the other hand in the United States, the census bureau deems a household “poor” if its annual income falls below specific income threshold. This shows how the parameter of measurement can differ in two different societies even though they are talking about the same concepts.

In its report, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) said, “poverty involves different deprivation that relate to human capabilities, consumption, health, education, security, dignity and decent work (2001). In the article “Economic Analysis of Poverty Levels among Rural Dwellers,” Akintola and Yusuf (2001) defined “poverty as a social condition, characterized by inadequate access to basic human needs (food and non–food) to the sustenance of socially acceptable minimum standard of living in a given society. Some of these basic human needs include adequate food, shelter, portable water, health care, and education and employment opportunities. They also stated that poverty has existed in diverse societies, in many different forms for ages. Its persistence has suggested that it is inevitable in any society.”

Poverty was defined by Greenwald and Associates (1996) as a condition in which income is insufficient to meet subsistence needs. A more encompassing definition was given by the United Nations definition of poverty, in which poverty was defined fundamentally as, “a
denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.” (Gordon 2005 p.4). The UN (1998) definition best describes the situation or type of poverty that exists among majority of Nigerians. And it will be adopted as the accepted definition of poverty for this research.

**What then is poverty in Nigeria?**

The World Bank report 2000 said Nigeria is the ninth largest oil producing country in the world. However, at least 70% of its population is poor according to Trends 2003. Poverty in Nigeria is best captured in the work of Oshewolo (2010); he writes, “Poverty holds sway in the midst of plenty, a situation described in Nigeria’s political lexicon as a ‘bewildering paradox.’” Nigerian’s situation is described as the case of Poverty amid plenty. Based on empirical data, Nigeria has been classified as a poor nation, despite the vast resource base of the country. 70.2 percent of the Nigerian population live on less than $1 a day, while 90.8 percent lives on less than $2 a day (Trends, 2003). The richest 20 % of Nigerian’s population earned 55.7 percent of the nation’s total income, while the poorest 20 % earned just 4.4 %. The World Bank report in 2008 reported on the alarming increase in poverty, and the sharp inequality between the rich and the poor in Nigeria. Although there has been steady economic growth in the last few years, Igbuzor, (2006 p.2) lamented whether the benefits are evenly distributed, especially to the poor, especially with report about Nigeria being among the 20 countries in the world with the widest gap between the rich and the poor.”

Because of the magnitude of the problem of poverty in Nigeria, governments both democratic and military have made effort both locally, through poverty alleviation programs, and internationally through aid and loans to alleviate or eradicate poverty in Nigeria. One of such efforts as noted by Oladeji and Abiola, (2000 p.2) was from organizations like United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; (UNCTAD), the World Bank, and The Inter-American Development Bank; they all adopted a policy that half of their loans have to be contributed
directly to poverty reduction programs in Africa. The Department for International Development (DFID) renewed its commitment to the moral imperative to end poverty, saying. “Ending poverty is the greatest moral challenge facing our generation.” Other efforts are those by the UN which created the Millennium Development Goal, with one of its focuses on, “ending poverty and hunger (Garces-Ozann, 2011). All these are strategies adopted with the aim of helping the poor to move away from poverty. Programs created by the government that aim at ending poverty in Nigeria are called poverty alleviation programs. Below is a description of some poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria

**Poverty Alleviation Programs in Nigeria**

The effort by Nigeria to end poverty in the country was started and was implemented as soon as the country got its independence from the colonial masters in 1960. The first president of the country Nnamdi Azikiwe quickly recognized that slavery and draining of resources to Europe had created high levels of poverty among the citizenry. He immediately swung into action by creating a poverty alleviation program whose emphasis was centered on education and agriculture at the time; these were seen as the keys that would lead to economic, technological and intellectual development of the nation: The program did not work because of power struggle in the country at the time, and Azikiwe was over thrown by a military coup. At independence in 1960, the percentage of people in poverty in the country was said to be 15% of the population, while currently, 70% of Nigeria’s population of 150 million are said to be living below poverty level.

Other poverty alleviation programs that were initiated by other heads of state include, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1979. The military president of the country at this time General Olusegun Obasanjo, designed this scheme to promote more technologically advanced forms of farming. This program did not serve the purpose for which it was created; critics were quick to point out that the scheme only succeeded in creating awareness of food shortage and the need to tackle the problem (Maduagwu, 2000). A general observation among Nigerians was that it was one of those programs that ended up only identifying problems rather than solutions. It also did not work because of the problem of policy formulation.

Another program that tried to head-off poverty by targeting the agricultural sector was the Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA). The Authority was intended
to reduce the prevalence of subsistence agriculture in the country, and in its place, infuse large scale commercial farming, by assisting farmers with inputs and developing land for farming (Arogundade, Adebisi, & Ogunro, 2011). This was also the period when fertilizer industries were put in place to encourage the production of fertilizer in the country for the purpose of helping farmers to have fertilizer. But the fertilizer industry had problems shortly after takeoff. The first problem of these fertilizer industries was under –funding: from inception, the industries were said to be producing below capacity level. The second problem was the issue of diversion of the fertilizer (exportation of fertilizer to other African countries) to neighboring countries where it was in high demand and cost more. The farmers never got to see the fertilizer, and they had to go to the black market to get fertilizer for their farms at expensive price; this was part of the reason that the program failed.

Apart from the fertilizer problem, this program also had the issue of land acquisition. Many senior civil and military officers, both in and out of office, used their access to state power to take advantage of the program, they accrued large track of land, this new breed farmers were only interested in getting Certificate of Occupancy for large tracts of land, according to Maduagwu (2000) When NALDA ended in 1983, 2 billion naira of taxpayers’ money was wasted. Garba, (2006) remarked that, rather than the program rewarding the poor, the influential people cashed into the fortune of acquiring lands for the purposes of obtaining grants and loans. The Nigerian Agricultural Land development Authority (NALDA) although it was made for the poor, it was hijacked by top military officers and senior civil servants.

The next program was by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985. This regime, more than any other regime, had the highest numbers of poverty alleviation programs; Arogundade et al. (2011) remarked that the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) was known to introduce a wealth of poverty alleviation programs. Some of these poverty alleviation programs included the Peoples Bank; this Bank was established to provide loans to prospective entrepreneurs on soft terms and without stringent requirements of collateral. The proposed was to help the poor as sources of cheap funds, more especially to the farmers, petty traders, community groups and their members, as well as encourage savings. Peoples Bank was fashioned after the, Grameen Bank in Bangladesh which is still functional and serving the poor in Bangladesh. Other
similar banks call Community Banks were licensed by the Babangida government to perform the same function as the Peoples Bank. The People’s Bank was to regulate the activities of the community banks, it was speculated that the peoples bank and the community banks were partial in the way they gave out loans to people, the activity of the bank was turned in to a family and friends’ affair. Only friends and families of the rich and influential were given loans according to speculations.

Another program created under General Babangida was the Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI). This program was created with the purpose of opening up rural areas via construction of feeder roads and provision of basic amenities that would turn them into production centers. This program targeted rural Nigeria; it was supposed to open the rural areas which ordinarily would not have been accessible. It was also aimed at promoting rural employment, based on the assumption that if rural infrastructure such as electricity was available in the villages, many welders for example would operate from there, instead of scrambling for spaces in congested urban centers. Part of the assumption was that if the rural areas were linked by road; farmers would transport their products to the markets easily and at cheaper rates, thereby reducing the cost of food production as a way out of poverty. Although many Nigerians found that DFFRI program was good, its impacts on the populace and poverty were minimal because of shortcomings in its implementation. Nigerians believed that The problem of this project was that most of the projects under this program, like the roads, water project as well as the electrification work were abound half way, and never completed by various contractors. The projects gulped N1.9b (about N80 billion today’s value) without Nigerians benefiting from them. (Maduagwu 2000)

Another program was the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) created by General Babangida. President Ibrahim Babangida saw unemployment as one of the problems facing the country; this program was created to give Nigerians training in vocational skills. NDE was to design and implement programs to combat mass unemployment and articulate policies aimed at developing work programs. This was a scheme that was considered the most successful because Nigerians for the first time could pinpoint some poor that were trained by this program (Obandan 1987). It was also one program that seemed to have properly targeted the poor in the country.
Ibrahim Babangida's wife, Mariam, according to Maduagwu (2000) also went into the business of caring for poor Nigerians. She set up a program call Better Life for Rural Women Program. She introduced this program as a way of helping rural women who are hardest hit by poverty due to lack of basic skills, and who lack required education necessary to have gainful employment. The program did helped women acquire vocational skills, as well as the provision of health care and did encourage rural development. However, this program had three fundamental problems; First, the program was not designed to take in to consideration the cultural environment of the country. The nature of the program was not culturally suited, because the better life program occurred at a period that recorded high divorce among Nigerian couples, and most men saw Mariam as trying to introduce feminist ideas in the country. The period saw wives demanding for equal rights and traveling for training from one place to another. The men considered these actions as deviating from the norms and values within the Nigerian society. The second problem like Ogwumike et al observed the program was hijacked by rich educated and influential women seeking for position. The third problem was that there was a lot of corruption among officials handing the programs (2003, p.10), this program ended with the regime in 1992 and women did not gain much from it financially. After the Babangida’s regime ended in 1992, General Sani Abacha took over government in the country.

The General Sani Abaca’s government took over for five years (1993 – 1998). And created many programs, among which is the “Family Economic Advancement Program” (FEAP) this program was to provide credit facilities to interested members of the society, support the establishment of cottage industries that will encourage production of essential goods, and ensure job creation in the country. This program did not also yield any meaningful results in the country. “The regime was known as the midwife in Nigeria’s quest for a way out of debilitating poverty, as this was the period that marked Nigeria’s relapse into the global bracket of 25 poorest nations” (Arogundade et al. 2011).

Apart from government organized poverty alleviation programs, there are also poverty alleviation programs organized by private individuals and International organizations such as the World Bank. The World Bank has contributed by organizing a poverty alleviation program call the National Fadama lowland irrigation project.
The National Fadama irrigation project is a lowland program introduced by the World Bank based on their analysis that poverty in Nigeria is in higher proportion in farming households. In their bid to help end the cycle of poverty, the bank is helping small household farmers with production via irrigation, because there are only two cropping seasons in Nigeria, in line with the World Bank (1996) findings that showed that agriculture is the locus of majority of poverty in Nigeria. The Fadama project fostered irrigational farming to exploit the possibility of all year round continuous cultivation by farmers. It has proven to be successful because according to Ayanwale and Alimi (2004) the World Bank financed the provision of shallow tube wells in Fadama lands for small scale irrigation, this action helped in simplifying drilling technology. The Fadama projects also organized farmers and helped farmers have access to credit, marketing, providing vehicles, pumps and other equipment. Participant’s progress was monitored and the impact of the program was assessed in six years period through a well organized data collection process. This program is still ongoing in some selected states of the country.

Another program that is considered a private poverty alleviation program is the Micro loan given by the Nigeria Agriculture Bank. Although the bank is a government operated bank, it is empowering the poor through the operation of micro finance as a strategy for Poverty reduction. According to Akanji (2001) Agriculture bank a government bank, organized a poverty alleviation program, where money is given to large number of school leavers with promising ideals to carry out business or project, this have help these graduates to have means of making income. Individuals and church organization in the society have also set up personally funded poverty alleviation programs with various names, some are philanthropic and self-help. The philanthropic NGOs are secular or religious organizations which focus on humanitarian programs. Examples of this type are the Lions Club, Rotary Club, The Red Cross, etc. The self-help NGOs focus on economic programs or self-help objectives among members. They usually operate in the form of professional groups or act as co-operatives to enhance members’ productivity and economic progress (Masoni, 1985). Despite effort by various governments to reduce poverty through alleviation programs, the only three things increasing in the country are poverty, tribal and religious conflicts and political instability. The next task before this research is to examine why these programs were not effective and what might make them more effective.
Assessment of Poverty Alleviation Programs

Governments in Nigeria have “designed and implemented numerous policies to tackle the scourge of poverty:” (Samuel & Wilfred, 2009 P.3) however most efforts in this direction have not yielded the expected results. Many reasons have been given for the lack of success; some believe that is bad governance, corruption, low productivity, unemployment, debt-burden and conflicts as being responsible for failure of poverty alleviation programs. Others attributed programs ineffectiveness to globalization, high population growth rate, and poor human resources development. Yet, others saw it as policy problem, and believed that acute poverty can be reduced or eradicated through effective policy measure” (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2009 p. 1).

Other reasons given for why programs have failed over the years, are by researchers like Ayanda & Tafida, (2000) they attributed the failure to government inability to formulate policy that target appropriate macroeconomic policies and programs that will lead to economic growth, as well as give access to social services and infrastructure in the society, they believe these are essential ingredients in any strategy for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. A similar argument was put forth by Aliu (2001), who stated that, the failure of programs is because of poor execution of programs, especially those aimed at the provision of social welfare services and the provision of economic infrastructure. Other suggestion as to why programs failed by Oladeji and Abiola (2000) were that policymakers did not address the combination of the social, cultural and political determinants of poverty. They went on to say that, while all these factors must be considered at the same time, any meaningful program must incorporate the behavioral context in which poverty is experienced, more specifically, it is essential to understand the motivations and constraints that affect the behavior of the poor. Some motivations and constraints are economic in nature; others are more social and cultural in nature. Another major issue that contributes to the failure of programs according to Obanda (2010) is that of funding. Soon after funding stops, the programs die off because they are neither designed nor implemented in the manner that they can sustain themselves.

An interesting argument as to why the programs had not succeeded came from Ovwasa (2000). According to him, the reason for failures of programs is that of the “politics of poverty” which arises essentially from the fact that those who are responsible for alleviating poverty are the non-poor. As explained by Adesopo (2008 p. 8), “the plight of the poor people have been
worsened by the excessive power that public officials enjoy in a country like Nigeria, where a few privileged people benefit from state generosity, leaving the larger portion of the population in abject poverty,” suggesting that because of the complex nature of poverty in Nigeria, a complex intervention will be required. One that will involve including the poor people in policy making, as well as creating community best poverty alleviation programs. Other suggestions about the success of programs were given by Oshewolo (2010). According to him, for a program to be successful, the government must essentially involve the state, market, civil society institutions and include beneficiaries.

The lack of success according to Lustig & Deutsch, (1998) is because “governments effort at eliminating or reducing poverty does not adequately target individuals towards social programs, programs are not well planned, as neither is the poor part of policy making. And even when programs are well targeted, they are badly funded and by any reasonable standard, grossly inadequate to cover the population that are poor because they lack the political support necessary for the program to succeed.”

None of these suggestions are out of place, in its contribution to knowledge about poverty. This research uses the suggestion by Reyes & Due (2009 p.9), that an effective poverty alleviation program in Nigeria must start by the “government identifying the poor, try to know why they are poor, and get an understanding of poverty through the eyes of the poor.” Garland, Massoumi and Ruble (2007 p.11), added that government must build upon local knowledge to improve understanding of the causes and characteristics of poverty, the solutions generated by local community… will targets needs and produce results.

I will call this community involvement the identification stage. None of the poverty alleviation programs seem to have made any effort at identifying the poor in Nigeria, or why they are poor; policies were made on assumptions. Garland et al (2007 P.11) suggested that the right move at the beginning of any poverty alleviation program should be the identification process. The second stage should be that of policy formulation, policy formulation should began in stages, putting first things first, policy makers should start the process of policy formulation from the community, policy makers should endeavor to visit the communities, for purpose of community interaction, it will allow for assessing local resources and knowledge base of communities. The third stage should be that of carrying out research on what program to be
carried out in each community, how much resource to be allocated, as well as the designing of training for all the people to be involved. The formulation and implantation of programs should not be the sole responsibility of government alone, but rather it should be a collective responsibility, with government guiding, rather than dictating.

The role of policymakers in every society cannot be underrated. For any meaningful development to take place in a society, those who are given the responsibility of policymaking must make decisions and put in place lasting policies that will bring positive change to the society. Policymakers should see themselves by virtue of their position and privileged of making decisions as agents of change; therefore, their interests in the society should be different from that of the common citizen, because they have access to privileged information others are excluded from (Sutton, 1999). Although the seed of bad leadership was sewn by the colonial masters who taught policy makers not to be sincere during policy formulation, but to instead try to keep the poor people poorer, while making sure policies are made with the aim of enriching and protecting a particular group of people. Programs are formulated by policy makers considering their friends that may get the contract to supply items that will be used during alleviation programs. Furthermore, less attention is given to how the poor will be affected. This is one of the major problems of the lack of success of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria.

The roles of the staff of poverty alleviation organization that work in the field need to be also looked into. Staffs who implement poverty alleviation program play vital roles in any poverty alleviation program. Like policy makers, the success or failure of programs can be ascribed to them. The manner in which they carry out this program will determine what happens to a program. However, there may be a lack of motivation to do a proper job because they are not well paid, neither are they trained on how to handle and carry out these projects. The culture of training and retraining is taken lightly in Nigerian society. Staffs who work in poverty alleviation organizations need to be trained and retrain on each program to be executed at each point and time. The most important part of these training to be given to them should be on how to work with people living in poverty, Staff needs to know and understand the thinking of people in poverty, and how to help them transit out of poverty.

Another problem that those programs had was that of targeting: the poor were excluded, and the rich were included. The rich took advantage of their position and power to hijack
programs. The poor should take the wheel, while the government should be taking a ride with the poor. This will give the poor ownership and sense of responsibility. The poor need to be given a choice about what they want to do to change their situation.

Another important problem is what I will call, “generalization of programs,” the one size fit all program usually designed for the whole country which has proven time and time again not to be effective. Any program that is introduced without taking due consideration the people and geographical area to which it will be introduced will fail.

Although none of the participants mentioned or speculated about what I will call the politicaliazation of programs. This study observed that, poverty alleviation programs are initiated at the begging of every new government as a way of keeping campaign promises, programs are usually carried out in a rush and not properly formulated.

Apart from self created problems like the ones listed above, the role of international bodies like IMF and World Bank cannot be ignored. Nigeria’s foreign debts are contributing to the lack of success of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Debts have made it impossible for Nigerian government to have enough resources to take care of domestic issues. Another recent example of intrusion by foreign bodies was the idea of privatization in the country.

In 2004, privatization was carried out as one of the condition of structural adjustment program which says, government should not be involve in doing business, there was general speculation that government properties were sold and bought by government officials below market rates. Looking at the perspective of the activities of these organizations, and how they have held the whole of the continent of Africa captive, indicates that the failure of these programs is not as a result of lack of efforts by Nigeria’s government or the poor people themselves, instead there is a structure that must be dismantled as part of the efforts to ensure that alleviation programs become successful in Nigeria. The activities of multinational organizations must be curtailed, so that the government will not be handicapped in the use of its resources in the country.

The literature review indicated that for effective poverty alleviation programs to be in place, the government must design programs that will ensure participation and proper targeting of the poor as beneficiaries of poverty alleviation. Lack of consultation of the poor about poverty alleviation programs shows lack of respect and leaves the poor voiceless in their own matter.
Government should put in place social services that will serve the poor in the society, and focus on poverty alleviation programs that will benefit the poor like agriculture, as well as tailor more programs that will be seen to nurture agriculture in the country. An important step in developing these poverty alleviation programs is to understand poverty alleviation from the perspective of the intended beneficiaries, who are the poor.
Methods

Theoretical perspective

This research is an exploratory qualitative study that will make use of the Phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is essentially the study of lived experience or the life world (Van Manen, 1997). Its emphasis is on the world as lived by a person, not the world or reality as something separate from the person (Valle et al., 1989). This therefore will enable the subjects of this research to give a reflective and interpretative understanding of their views about the working of poverty alleviation programs. The experiences of beneficiaries were what the questions were geared to bring out, “What their experiences were like when they participated in programs” as it attempts to unfold meanings from their everyday existence, no two experiences are the same. In addition some experiences will be influenced by the roles participants play within a given time. The study of these phenomena intends to return and re-examine these taken for granted experiences of beneficiaries of programs, and perhaps uncover new and or forgotten meanings.

Recruitment and Selection of Subjects

Recruitment and selection of the sample for this research started by a personal visit to the chief executive of poverty alleviation programs organization in Abuja, Nigeria. The purpose of the visit was to introduce the research, explain the reason for the research, and clearly explain that this research was not a fault finding study, but an attempt by the researcher to suggest ways that will increase the effectiveness of poverty alleviation program in the country. At the time of this research work there was an uprising in the country, and government offices were empty because people feared for their lives, therefore it took the researcher two visits to the organization before she got an officer who directed her on whom to meet for information about participants of government poverty alleviation programs. The officer provided four names and telephone numbers of persons that had participated on their programs, out of which only three could be interviewed due to the restriction on movement at the time, the fourth participant lived in an area that was considered very unsafe by the researcher. In the mean time, the researcher had gone to the three markets in Abuja with the hope of finding dozens of people that had participated in any government poverty alleviation program, but discovered that there were hardly any people that had participated in government alleviation programs, aside from those organized by churches. Three
people directed the researcher to a private radio host, who anchors programs on poverty alleviation on the radio. Although I also did not meet him, I meet his assistant who gave me a list of 120 participants that had just graduated from a program sponsored by a private individual; the program was called the “Hope Incentive.” Because my interest was in beneficiaries of government organized programs, I interviewed only two people from this privately organized program, I continued with my search for participants. I was surprised at the number of days and hours it took to get two other people that had participated in government program (outside the list of four people given to me by the official of poverty alleviation program). My difficulty in recruiting suggested support for the claim that the poor are not the real beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Otherwise I should have found many people in the markets that had benefit from poverty alleviation programs. I was introduced to my last participant who benefited from a bank organized program by a friend, this bring the numbers of my participants to eight.

Sample Population Description

The anticipated number of participants for this research work was 10 people. This number was expected to comprise beneficiaries of various previous government organized poverty alleviation programs. Unfortunately only eight people could be interviewed because of the restriction of movement in the country at the time due to the uprising.

Sample Characteristics

This study did not include any person/participant that was under age 18, prisoners, or mentally disabled persons. However, four of the participants were economically and educationally disadvantaged, while two had university (college) degrees, and two had secondary school experience (high school). Two of the respondents were female. The demographic characteristics are consistent with Nigerian society, where men dominate. Women are not very involved in economic activities. Interviews were not audiotape because it was assumed that people would not be comfortable speaking on tape. All participants in this research study were recruited from the Abuja zone. Abuja was chosen because all programs are planned from Abuja and passed down to every state in the country. The organization operates a central control system of administration, the list of four beneficiaries was obtained from the poverty alleviation organization, only three were interviewed, the fourth person could not be reached, I got two other people from the market, while two were from the private organized Hope Incentive program, the
The last participant who had benefited from a Bank program was introduced to me by a friend. The researcher contacted beneficiaries directly and interviewed the participants she contacted. A meeting time was scheduled at beneficiaries’ convenience, and the researcher took the risk of going to meet all the participants even though there was restriction of movement in the country at the time. The researcher’s car served as the interview venue due to restriction of movement. Participants did not receive any monetary incentive for participating in the study.

**Interview Procedure**

The interviews were all carried out in a car, which was parked under trees close to participants houses, due to the riot going on in the country at the time. The purpose of the research was explained to a participant before each interview started. Consent letters were read out in a language understood by participants, and for those who could read, the consent letter was handed to them to read. It was also stated before the interview that there was no penalty for those who withdraw, as such that they were free to withdraw at any point during the interview, or refuse to answer questions they were not comfortable with, without penalty. The issue of confidentiality was restated many times before the interviews began.

There were different questions from most participants, some seemed to be confused about who I was, and why I would “waste my time” to conduct the interview and take such a risk without being paid by government or my school. Others pleaded with me to make sure the government read their interviews, even when I told them no government official was going to have access to the interview. Their reasons were that they have been looking for an opportunity to tell the government their opinion about the way the government treat the poor in the society for a long time. The length of the interview varied, it went from one hour to two hours with each participant. The interviews consisted of ten open ended questions. The questions were structured in such a way to collect information about participants’ personal experiences. All the questions were oriented towards getting in-depth information about poverty alleviation programs and the way they operate. Some questions also gave the participants the opportunity to voice what they thought was wrong or right about these programs, and what they wanted government to do differently. All questions were asked with the aim of gaining insights that will lead to a solution to more effective poverty alleviation programs. (See appendix C for specification of questions.)

**Field Notes**
Field notes were taken during the interview to help me remember and record some observations that helped with analysis. The field notes covered information such as: ideas for themes that came up during the interview that will give more insight into the problem of poverty alleviation programs. Observation was made about the anger with which people were answering questions, and even those passing by wanted to volunteer to be interviewed thinking I was from the poverty alleviation organization, they said they wanted to voice out their anger to the government. I noticed that all of the participants talked about how poverty alleviation programs are government propaganda, they feel it seemed to be only on television or aired on radio, but in reality, people do not know anything about the programs, and they had not seen anyone who has benefitted from the programs.

Data Analysis

Data were collected in Nigeria, but analysis was carried out in the United States. Pseudonyms were used throughout this thesis, with actual names of participants kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office. Data will be destroyed immediately after completion of the master’s thesis.

During the process of analyzing the data, the researcher suspended her preconception about the data, and focused on grasping the experiential world of the various research participants. Open-ended dialogue was encouraged between the researcher and participants. The researcher worked closely and intensively with the text, coding for insight into participants’ experiences and perspective of poverty alleviation programs. Emerging codes were catalogued in order to look for patterns in the codes. Themes were sorted out to help identify what mattered to the participants. From themes, the researcher grouped themes in to groups under much broader themes call super ordinate themes. The final sets of themes will be summarized and evidence from the text will be provided to backup the themes. (Qualitative research methods class resources on Niihka, 2011)
Results

To analyze these data, this study took the inductive approach for two reasons. First: it will help the researcher to establish links between the research objective and summary of findings derived from the data, and secondly, this approach allows the data to speak for itself. In further explaining this method of analysis, Thomas (2006 p.1) said, “The goal of this type of analysis is to use themes as analytical tools for understanding the factors that are affecting the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria.”

Table 1 (below) is a representation of demographic of participants that were interviewed in this study. There were six men and two women, whose ages were estimated, because the interview procedure did not include demographic information of participants. This was a way of protecting participant’s confidentiality, and avoiding the risk of them being victims in the future. The type of benefit they received from the government, as well as the year in which they participated, is also specified in the table.

Table 1–
Demography characteristic of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Estimate of age</th>
<th>Type of Poverty Alleviation Program</th>
<th>Type of Benefit Received</th>
<th>Year participated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>A shop</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RD4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Phone cash and motorcycle</td>
<td>2004,2006 and 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R15</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>A job and cash</td>
<td>2009, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RZ6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RK8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main themes

Overall, there are six themes that emerged from analysis of the data. These were:

**Theme 1:** Lack of confidence in Government. Participants have no confidence in governmental poverty alleviation programs due to politicalization of the programs, a beneficiary complained of the lack of continuity of programs.

**Theme 2:** Improper targeting of the poor by government officials, and the issue of lack of participation of the poor in the program’s policy formulation. The poor were not part of the policy formulation process, even though they are the intended beneficiaries of it; neither were there any formal training for participants about programs they participated in.

**Theme 3:** Limited information about poverty alleviation programs in the society. Poverty alleviation programs are not widely known in the society. The poor do not have access to poverty alleviation officials in the country, and there are suggestions about the insincerity and corruption by government officials.

**Theme 4:** Activities of coordinators of poverty alleviation programs were seen as problematic. This was despite the fact that the coordinators were also seen as key to the success of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria.

**Theme 5:** Contrast between government and private poverty alleviation organizations. Participants speculated as to why privately organized poverty alleviation programs were successful compared to government organized programs.

**Theme 6:** the government limited knowledge of the poor, and participants’ suggestions about what the government needs to do to help improve the situation of the poor in Nigeria. The attitude of the poor towards resources they collect from governmental poverty alleviation programs.

**Theme 1: Lack of confidence in Government organized poverty alleviation programs**

The first notable theme that emerged from the data was the lack of confidence by participants in the government’s poverty alleviation program, due to the politicalization of programs, poverty alleviation programs are carried out as part of fulfillment of political campaign promises. All eight participants on this study complained about how programs have been turn in to political affairs. A participant talked about the fact that poverty alleviation programs exist only in the media. His remarks included
“I am the chairman of fisher association, if any of my members participate in any program I will know. So I want you to know that poverty alleviation exist only in the air.” (RMA3)

The Politicalization of these programs has led to a general lack of confidence in the government, five out of the eight participants gave the Nigerian government 0% out of 100% in the way it handles its poverty alleviation programs. The response of one of the respondents is a representation of the broader group, he said:

“I will rate it very poor, I will give them zero, because it does not last and does not last beyond a year, even when government leaves, it is expected that the programs will continue, but all the programs I know about, start and end in one year, or even some months while that government is still in office, while the poor still remains.” (RT1)

The complaint about programs lasting only six months or one year shows how government poverty alleviation programs lack continuity due to their political nature. One participant even compared the level of benefit of programs to the number of people in poverty; she talked about the fact that government poverty alleviation programs are not well organized. She participated in a privately organized program.

“I will give them 0% because government’s effort towards eradicating poverty is low when compared to the number of people in poverty... I hear about them only... I don’t know what government is doing, if this was a program organized by government I will not answer or come to participants, because it will be half baked.” (RZ6)

By “half baked,” she meant that it will not be well organized.

**Theme 2: Improper targeting of the poor by government officials**

The issue of improper targeting was one that was echoed by all the participants. For they talked about not knowing about government programs on poverty alleviation, except the ones they have participated in. They blame it on lack of proper targeting of the poor, instead the rich people, or middle class benefit more. One participant puts it this way:

“I don’t know any of the government programs, where are the programs? The thing is the programs are not well targeted, so I don’t know which one helped the common people.” (RMA3)
A participant talked about how wrong targeting only creates jobs for the rich people and their children. In one of the programs, a participant talked about how coordinator of that program and his children used government money to travel around the world, therefore there is an obvious mismanagement by government. A participant advised for a change in the way policies are formulated in the country, and called on government to make the poor their partners in policy formulation as well as in policy implementation. He remarked:

“He turned the business into a family business, he brought his children to manage the business, and they were more traveling around the world using the money we bring every day, that was how the business was run. Of course that was mismanagement of government money. So therefore there is need to change the way policies are made in this country. The poor should be the target and they should be partners with government in policy formulation as well as in implementation of policies, because this involves them, the poor.” (RT1)

The problem of lack of proper targeting of the poor was also linked to the lack of participation of the poor in the policy formulation process of government. In their responses to the question of how many times they had been called upon by government to be part of policy making for any poverty alleviation program, all the participants said they were never called upon, whether at the local or federal level to be part of policy making about any programs that government had implemented for poverty alleviation. One of the participants observed:

“Never, nobody knows anything about the policy making of government; they just make decisions about what program they want to have.” (RA2)

A participant summed up the issue of a uniform program in the country and lack of involvement of the poor with government saying:

“Government should carry out needs assessment before embarking on a program. Some programs don’t fit some communities, there is the need to ask people questions about what programs fits where.” (RD4)

Need assessment will enable the government to learn what resources are found in each community, instead of the usually uniform programs in the country. Closely related to the issue of lack of participation is the problem of lack of training for participants about programs to be carried out. When asked if there was any form of training given to them about any of the programs in
which they participated, or any help that they wanted as part of the program in which they participated in, a participant who had participated three times said that he was a trainer on one of the programs. He said he had his undergraduate degree in the social aspects of information technology, and was recruited by a poverty alleviation agency to train participants on information technology, but there were problems during the training session. He remarked,

“Yes there was training. I trained participants on information technology, the sociological aspect of information technology. Sometimes the officials from the poverty alleviation program would take over from the instructors and teach participants. However, there were management teaching aids. Generators were provided but the provisions for fuel money (gas) was not enough, so participants were taxed to get money for the fueling of the generators. The computers were also not enough. There were lots of problems during the training.” (RI5)

There was clear lack of proper planning in this poverty alleviation program, because, participants had to buy gas for the generators, the computers were also not enough to go around for the participants. Another concern is that this training program is not well suited to the educational level of participants, and also because computers are not very common in the society.

**Theme 3 Lack of information about poverty alleviation programs in the society.**

The search for participants that had benefited from any government poverty alleviation programs, and the question about what program participants liked, or did not like gave rise to a probe question about why programs are not known in the society, and the response by most of the participants showed that they have little or no knowledge about programs that are said to have been carried out by the government. Here are remarks of some of the respondents. One participant responded:

“I don’t know any of the programs, where are the programs? The programs don’t reach people at all, so I can’t say which one I liked.” (RMA3)

The answer to the question about how often participants interact with officials of poverty alleviation organization during the implementation of any poverty alleviation program, led to responses that showed that large number of the respondents do not have access to officials of poverty alleviation organizations, nor do they know where the organization offices are located, meanwhile there are at list one office of poverty alleviation programs in each state and each local government of the 36 states in Nigeria. Another participant remarked,
“The major problem about poverty alleviation programs is the fact that we don’t know how to contact them directly when you have any problem with a program.” (RT1)

Another respondent that has participated three times remarked,

“I just told you I never even know who they are. I did not work for them and don’t even know where their office is located. Who will you talk to when you get there? The oga’s (boss) are not easy to see, and the low officers will not even listen to you. We only saw facilitators of the program that were our teachers. And not poverty alleviation program officers. The only day we saw any official was the day we graduate in gwagwalada city and that was it.”

**Theme 4: Activities of coordinators of poverty alleviation programs were seen as problematic.**

The coordinators were seen as key to the success of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Coordinators are appointees of the government, who oversee the running of poverty alleviation programs at the three levels of government in the country. There are indications that coordinators may have constituted some of the problems that some poverty alleviation programs have had.

An interviewer who had participated three times in government organized poverty alleviation programs said, the government has tried, but according to him, the intermediaries are to be blamed for the problems. Although he said he does not know much about the criteria for their appointments, he claimed that they are appointed by the government at all levels. He remarked,

“I can put it at 50% success, they have tried, but the problem is from the intermediaries who are supposed to link government to the people. Those who government appoint to serve as coordinators, I don’t know how they are appointed; we have three set of coordinators, the federal, state and local coordinators.” (RD4)

Another participant referred to such a coordinator on his program as the chairman, he complained that three months into the program, the money they were meant to be getting from the program went down from N7000 to N3500, and the explanation by the chairman was that the government had reduced the money. He remarked.

“I remember I collected N7000 for only three months, after which in the fourth month, they started paying us N3500, and said the government have reduced the money they give our chairman to give us.” (RT1)
When he was further asked if he believed the chairman’s explanation that the government had reduced the money that was supposed to be giving to participants, he answered by saying;

“No, I did not belief him, even if the money was reduced, we would have gotten more, but you know in this country people just do what they want, they may have cut the money, but I feel he was also trying to take care of his families and friends, the money stopped after 6 months, we took the matter up with even the local government chairman at the time, but he also confirmed that it was government that had stopped the program”

(RT1)

Although the local government chairman is a government official, he is not in the right position to know if the money had been reduced, the poverty alleviation organization should have been the appropriate place to make such inquiries. Participants’ experiences had showed the lack of accessibility of poverty alleviation officials in the society.

**Theme 5: The contrast between government and private poverty alleviation organizations.**

While most participants had said in their remarks that the government had failed in the poverty alleviation programs that have been carried out, remarks from participants of privately organized programs were different. Three of the participants in this research study who took part in programs that were organized by private individuals and banks, talked about how successful such programs were.

One of the participant said he had participated in the World Bank poverty alleviation program call “Fadama.” This program is a world bank sponsored program to help farmers in Nigerians in various areas, he narrates his experience.

“I participated and worked with the world bank project call Fadama project, the projects was good, they helped me, they trained me, gave me wheel-biro to pack my fish, they gave me tables on which to display my fish, and a machine. That is World Bank not Nigeria government.” (RMI3)

A participant talked about how well organized the private program in which she had participated in was organized, she asserted the government should organize better programs like what private individuals are organizing, she remarks,
“This program I participated in is free, but people have no transport money or means of getting to the training center and back home every day. If an individual can do this, the government can do better. If they cannot organize programs, they should partner with private people to help them.” (RZ6)

**Theme 6: Lack of knowledge of the poor by the government, and participants’ suggestions**

A participant said the problem of poverty alleviation programs is that the governments have no knowledge of the poor people or where they live. She observed,

“I feel the government does not even know the poor, in fact they don’t know where the poor even are.” (RR7)

The poor feel alienated by the government in the country. There were many suggestions about what the government need to do. One participant said that, the whole system of government in the country needs overhauling. The first step will be to first alleviate the poverty of public workers so that they will concentrate on doing their jobs properly, the government should then rearrange poverty alleviation programs, and he encourage people in the society to acquire vocational skills.

“A lot, first they should overhaul the system of governance. Improve on working conditions of workers. Eradicate the poverty of the public servant first to enable them to concentrate on their job, and not take bribe Secondly, rearrange the program to take care of everybody in the society, and thirdly, Tailor skill acquisition, re organize the system by making sure that the programs takes care of all the segments of poverty in the society. People should have places they can go for skill acquisition, learn to accrue one skill or the other.” (RR7)

Another participant thinks the problem that needs to be addressed is the operation of the government; he said the present day governments in Nigeria do not care about the common people anymore. Business men just do what they want and get away with it, since there are no government regulations in the country. He believes that giving money to poor people will not solve the situation, but rather, bringing back industries that have relocated from Nigeria to Ghana back to Nigeria will give some hope. In response to a question about what they think could be the solution to the poverty situation in Nigeria, participants suggested to the government what to do. A participant puts it this way
“There are 100 and one things that the government can do, giving money will not help the people, they should bring back industries that we had before back to the country, that was helping people with employment as well as produced goods that will help the poor, when there is a problem like now, these people will take care of themselves. But given money is not the solution, why are companies now in Ghana. The poor don’t want to be alleviated; they just want to be able to feed their families.” (RMA3)

Another participant suggested that policymakers should move programs to the grassroots, where they are most needed. When asked how he thinks that is possible, he said people who have power and influence in the society highjack poverty alleviation programs, and the real poor people don’t get to benefit from programs. He remarks:

“If I am to make suggestions or any input, I will want policy makers to move the scheme to the grass root. It should be brought more to people who need it...The people who have power and wealth are the one’s benefiting from these programs. For example people were given loan in 2010 of about 1million to 5 million Naira by the government poverty alleviation program, but directors and local chiefs were the ones who benefited from it, instead of the government to give to the real poor, even if they have given only N30, 000 to the poor, it will help them, this is part of the reason why the rich keep getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.” (RD4)

Another participant suggested that the government should open training centers where people can go and learn skills. However the high amount of money charged by government organizations that operate vocational skills was something she thinks the government needs to look in to, she said she feels the government does not know the poor, she said the government should know the poor people well so as to help them, people are only display on television by government, but the help given to them is not well organized. China she said has helped their people out of poverty. She remarked,

“They should open schools or buildings where people will be train and employed to do hard work, people should be train in; making furniture, building houses, painting houses instead of given out keke (motor cycles) that not everybody knows how to ride. I know they have a centre in the women center, but you pay so much to enter the school, after which they should give out loan, and ask people to pay back little at a time. I feel the
government does not even know the poor, in fact they don’t know where the poor even are. When they have a program they bring people on television and show them, but the help is not well organized. Look at China today; they have helped their people to rise from poverty. Another problem is the one of uniform programs to every state in the country; we are not all the same.” (RR7)

She called on policy makers to stop the practice of having uniform programs in the country, because one criterion does not fit all according to her.
Discussion

From all of the definitions given by social scientists about poverty, one issue stood out, that of “lack”. The emphasis on lack by all the authors made it the central characteristic of poverty; this lack could involve; resources, opportunities, participation, education or choices. Whichever type of lack people are experiencing, as long as it is associated to poverty, it can destroy self-confidence and human dignity, and leave people in a lot of psychological pains.

Many researchers and authors have attributed the causes of poverty in Nigeria to factors including bad governance, (marked by corruption, and history of long period of military dictatorship); others link it to the large population of the country, or the high level of illiteracy in the country. While it could be true that all these and many more could be blamed for poverty in Nigeria, this research study will contributes to greater understanding of the poverty situation in Nigeria looking at issues like, the deep rooted hopelessness that has been created by poverty in the country, and the lack of enough knowledge on the part of the government about poverty or the thinking of people in poverty.

The United Nations definition of what constitutes poverty is well reflected in the Nigerian society, the poverty situation was well captured in the definition given by the United Nations, where by the poor in Nigeria do not have choices and opportunities, their human dignity is violated, even in the way and manner in which they are not involved in policy formulation about programs that concerns them. The poor lack the capacity to participate effectively in the society because, they are struggling to feed and clothe their families; their lands are sometimes being taken away from them by the government every now and then for big government projects, and they have to live in fragile environments with no access to the necessities of life like, clean water, electricity or proper sanitation. The situations of poverty have developed a high sense of insecurity among the poor, and have made the country very susceptible to violence; this in turn leads to more destruction of life and properties. Poverty alleviation programs are therefore seen by every government as a way to help in reducing the suffering of the people in the country. However these poverty alleviation programs have are not effective in the country.

This study on the factors associated with the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria from the perspective of intended beneficiaries was conducted by the use of
interviews, guided by the underlying premise of phenomenological theory. This theory allowed participants to give a reflective and interpretative understanding about the working of poverty alleviation programs from their personal experiences. Interviews were designed in such a way that they captured the perspective of participants and their understanding about the effectiveness of alleviation programs. Many themes came up in the data, but this study will build on some of the themes that showed that factors like the politicalization of poverty alleviation programs, lack of knowledge about the poor by the government, lack of proper targeting of the poor, activities of coordinators of programs, and lack of information and involvement of the poor in policy formulation about programs (among other things) have been the reasons for the lack of effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria.

Deduction from the data on this study showed that politicalization of programs is the major reason why the government organized poverty alleviation programs are not effective, and ultimately fail. By politicalization this study means, politicians making promises to the poor to create poverty alleviation programs during electoral campaign, that is why every new government will create new programs instead of ensuring that old programs are maintained and continued. The Politicalization of governance in Nigeria has its roots from the experience of people during the colonial period, whereby colonial masters talked about developing the country by bringing religion and education, while in reality, Nigerians were being exploited. The same mentality seems to have been carried on by the Nigerian elite that worked with the colonial masters. In the same manner, from observation based on my interviews with beneficiaries of programs, poverty alleviation programs have been politicized, participants talked about how they now see poverty alleviation programs as political slogans by politicians who want to win election, and have nothing to do with helping the poor. This is what this study means by the politicalization of poverty alleviation. Because Poverty alleviation programs are to be carried out as fulfillment of promises during political campaigns, after winning an election, the new government as a way to show that they are keeping to their campaign promise, will organized with the media to show them on television launching poverty alleviation program that they had embark on, these programs last only six months to one year as indicated by one participants in this study; the politicalization of these programs have led to lack of continuity of the programs.
In his contribution about the politicalization of programs and their lack of continuity, Ovwasa, (2000), explained that poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria are not run by the poor who will have ensured its continuity. But how can the poor run any program when they are never consulted in their own matter, and are neither part of the government policy formulation process, nor implementation of programs. Although Obanda, (2010) saw funding as the problem of lack of continuity of programs, he said as soon as funding stops, poverty alleviation programs die off, because they are neither designed nor implemented in the manner that they can sustain themselves. Poverty alleviation programs are underfunded by the government in Nigeria, thus leading to the creation of very few programs. The creation of few programs justifies participants’ observation about the inadequacy of programs when compared to the number of poor people in poverty. There are not enough programs to serve all the poor in the society.

Contributing on the lack of continuity due to politicalization, Sola (2006 P.3) also talked about how “launching of poverty alleviation programs because of their political nature have a lot of funfair attached to them, but as soon as such launching finished, the programs are abandoned. People who manage the programs at one level or the other continue to pursue their own personal benefits at the expense of the government.” Poverty alleviation programs start and end in less than three months. Furthermore, there is also the problem of planning programs due to limited data, there is no correct population figures that government can use for planning of programs; resources are allocated to programs based on estimates. For an effective poverty alleviation program to be in place, policy makers will need disaggregate poverty maps that have proper description of the distribution of poverty in the country, this maps should represent small geographical units of villages, towns and cities (Alderman, Babita, Demombynes, Makhatha, & Ozler, 2002). Information is an important tool in planning, if policy makers in Nigeria will have the number of villages, towns and cities, and the demography of these places, it will make it easier to know how much to allocate to programs, as well as what program should be carried out in every part of the country, and what part of the country will need more or less resources.

Other factors that have made poverty alleviation less effective according to participants is the lack of identification of the poor in the country, because at the moment a participant feels the government does not know the poor, or where they live. The claim by a participant that government does not know the poor justifies why there seems to be little knowledge about these
programs in the society. The people who benefit from these programs are definitely not the poor. The poor have little means and knowledge of how to reach the government. It is the responsibility of the government to not only reach out to the poor, but also know the poor, what they need, and what is required to get them out of poverty, because the government is made to serve the general public. Therefore the government must make itself available to the general public.

Other themes from the research data identified wrong targeting as another factor that has played a role in the effectiveness of specific government effort at eliminating or reducing poverty. This study observed that programs are neither designed nor implemented in ways that properly target the poor. Lustig and Deutsch (1998) says that targeting problems lead to the problem of inclusion and exclusion of people during poverty alleviation programs, exclusion of the poor, and inclusion of the rich people who are not supposed to be part of the programs.

All the participants in this study talked about government officials, and the big men in government hijacking and influencing programs to favor themselves, their families and friends. A participant gave an example of how a wealthy telecommunication man was assigned 120 vehicles during one of the poverty alleviation program. He turned it in to a family business by employing his children to head and managed the program. The money generated by the drivers was spent on traveling by the children. And because the vehicles were not well managed, they all broken down in the first two years of the program.

Nigerians should learn from and model other successful poverty alleviation programs around the world. Although this suggestion may not necessarily bring success to Nigeria, there was the experiences of copying the concept of the Grameen bank in Bangladesh. The idea to establish the peoples bank in Nigeria was taken from Grameen bank, while the Grameen bank in Bangladesh is still doing great at saving poor people, on the order hand the People’s Bank in Nigeria did not last six years. This may have to do with the problem of copying without modifying the copied program to suit the new environment. While like the Garmeen bank of Bangladesh whose concept was built around small man, “the Peoples Bank of Nigeria claim to be small man oriented too, but it was run by big men who do not know what it means to be poor, have no knowledge of the culture of poverty, neither do they appreciate the thinking of people in poverty.
Responses from participants showed that the participants had their dreams, hope and aspirations; they clearly had ideals about what they wanted, but unfortunately they were not given the opportunity to realize them. Instead they were made to feel as if they were undeserving. In the same way from this researcher’s observations, policies are made and implemented in ways that encourage continued marginalization of the poor by the rich. This suggests that there is a structural problem that allows for the deprivation of the political and economic rights of the poor. Individuals in government tend to have placed some structural barriers, which have limited the poor completely from having any input or sense of belonging in government’s policy formation or implementation. The same structural barrier is seen to have been responsible for the problem of accountability in poverty alleviation programs. Public officials in Nigerian society are not held accountable for policy making and implementations, therefore this lack of accountability has made it difficult for the poor to demand for explanation, or express their grievances about policies they are not satisfied with.

The importance of information cannot be over emphasized in any country. This research has shown that vast majority of participants lack knowledge, and is not aware of some alleviation programs that had taken place in the country: the question then becomes, why are programs not publicized to the general public? For poverty alleviation programs to be more effective, the government needs to improve the method of passing information to the public. Government agencies like the ministry of Information, or Youth Sport and Culture should be used to get information about poverty alleviation programs to the general public. Television and radio have proven not to be very effective tools of communication, given the level of infrastructure and technological development in the country. Consequently the government should devise more ways of reaching the general public with information about programs. The lack of information can be closely linked to participants’ lack of knowledge or locations of offices, and officials of government poverty alleviation programs, the reason is because programs are carried out by coordinators and not official of poverty alleviation agency themselves. It is not out of place to have coordinators handling the implementation of programs, but where it has proven to be ineffective, like in the case of Nigeria, the government will have to change its policy about allowing coordinators to run programs, and create another policy that will serve the people and achieve results.
Coordinators are often political appointees, and they operate at the three levels of government, that’s the federal, state and local government levels. There is need to replace coordinators at the lowers level of government: that is, the local government level, with community leaders, who should be elected by the people themselves.

**What are the factors that will make poverty alleviation more effective?**

Overall, themes from the data tell us a great deal about the direction policy makers should take towards future policy making. The factors that will make poverty alleviation programs more effective in the country are that: The government needs to change the way it views and treat the poor. Government jobs have no doubt vested on government officials with the responsibility of making policies for the country. But the voice of the people is saying we want to come on board and take the ride, and not just be watchers by the side. A participant expressing his frustration about alleviation programs said;

"The poor don’t want to be alleviated; they just want to be able to feed their families...Nigeria is like a company that belongs to a few, while majority just watch, and are suffering in poverty". (RMA3)

The frustration about poverty among people in the society is responsible for the religious and tribal conflicts in the country. Corruption and bad governance have no doubt helped to fuel and keeps the cycle of poverty going. The fight against poverty in Nigeria can only be successful if the government has an all-compassing policy to end poverty. This policy will be one that will be sincere, transparent and people oriented, to ensure social justice and incorporate a community based policy that will give people ownership of programs about poverty alleviation from policy formulation to implementation of programs.

**Are poverty alleviation programs really a solution to the poverty situation in Nigeria?**

Analyses from this research data suggest that poverty alleviation programs are not the solution to the poverty situation in Nigeria. A rich oil producing country like Nigeria, said to be the ninth largest oil producing country in the world (Trends 2003) with so much untapped natural and human resources, has no reason to have had this long fight with poverty. The poverty situation will be completely turned around if the government can govern the country with sincerity by ensuring proper distribution of wealth in the country, creating opportunities for youths to be self employed, fighting corruption from the office of the president to the lower
public officers, putting in place instruments that will be used by the general public to hold government officials accountable, and silencing the constant beating of war drums in the country, then Nigerians will start to have some sense of belonging to the country. Another opinion by Elumilade, Asaolu and Adereti are that “Poverty in Nigeria can be reduced drastically if the prevailing social and political conditions are conducive for foreign investments” (2006 p.4) Nigeria is seen as politically unstable, contribution from Maduagwu (2000) also suggested the inflow of foreign investments, but observed that it cannot materialize in unstable political and economical environment. Participants have also called on the government to concentrate on governing the country in such a way that gives people some sense of belonging, instead of creating poverty alleviation programs.

The poor can only feed their families if they can have opportunities that will allow them to earn a living. This may represent the opinion of most Nigerians had this research had more participants,

**Limitation of the study**

The major limitation of this research is the size of the sample; only 8 beneficiaries participated in the study. As such the result of this study cannot be generalized because it will not be a fair representation of the beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria.

A second limitation is that the researcher did not talk to all stakeholders of poverty alleviation programs, only the beneficiaries participated in the study. Other important stakeholders of poverty alleviation programs which includes the government or policy makers and staff of poverty alleviation organization will definitely have different opinions about why programs have not being effective. And perhaps they would have different suggestions for change. Lack of inclusion of other stakeholders’ forms a limitation for this study.

A final limitation of this study is that, the data collection period coincided with a period where there was an uprising in Nigeria. Beneficiaries were tense, angry and frustrated because of the crisis that was going on; the situation may have affect or influence their responses. Some participants opinion may have been influenced by the crisis, because the crisis was poverty related, while yet others would have said less because of the hopelessness of the situation at the time. The crisis situation made data gathering for this research study stressful. It was very difficult to locate staff of poverty alleviation program agency because of the riot. When the researcher finally got some of the staffs and got a list of participants that had taken part in
government alleviation programs, there was restrictions of movement in the country, so this restrictions made it very difficult for the researcher to reach the participants and carry out interviews, the researcher took a lot of risk to reach the participants that took part in this research work.

The consequence of this limitation is the fact that the problems of poverty alleviation programs may not be well represented here. A more in-depth research that will involve all stakeholders with a large sample size will need to be carried out.
Recommendations

“The poor don’t want to be alleviated; they just want to be able to feed their families” (RMA3).

The recommendations in this study will address the question of whether poverty alleviation programs are really the solution to the poverty situation in Nigeria. It is very clear from the data that the poor want to be able to function properly as members of the society who are taking care of their families. That is only possible when the economy of the country is made to operate properly and to flourish. That will require the government taking certain steps towards making policies that will ensure economic improvement, such that the poor will not need poverty alleviation programs. The following are the steps the government needs to take.

First, the government should not concentrate so much energy in initiating poverty alleviation programs, but instead, it should focus on improving the economy by ensuring that economic activity picks up. Industries should come back to Nigeria from Ghana, and electricity must be made available. This can be done by allowing other companies to come in to the country and compete alone side the National Power Holding Company of Nigeria, or better still government should exploit the idea of solar system to complement the power holding company. The Government should stop being the “sole” business provider in the country. A fair atmosphere will be one that ensures social justice for all and allow for competition and choice in the society.

The second thing for the government to do will be to ensure the delivery of equitable economic benefits across the entire country. The gap between the rich and the poor should be minimize, if possible narrowed down to the barest minimal. Nigeria is among the 20 countries in the world with the widest gap between the rich and the poor according to Igbugor (2006), this gap makes the situation a ‘bewildering paradox, because poverty is holding sway in the midst of plenty in the country. There are many un-tapped resources in the country, while proceeds from the tapped resource are in the hands of a few” (Oshewolo, 2010 p.1).

The third area which has been mentioned by scholars over and over again is that, the government should focus on giving the poor the ownership of their destiny, and for once serve as helper, instead of dictators to the poor. Policies about poverty alleviation should be designed and
planned by those who will be the beneficiaries. It gives the poor a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the success of programs. The practices of formulating policies from “top” and passing it down to the “bottom” have no doubt suggested not being effective in Nigeria. This researcher recommends the adaptation of the Malawi 1994 policy framework of poverty alleviation programs, which adopts a grass root solution that emphasizes the need for participation of the government, the civil society and the private sector to explore grassroots solutions to poverty. As suggested by Oshewolo (2010), any successful process must necessarily involve the state, market, civil society institutions and include beneficiaries. The Government should start running programs that are community based. Local elders or leaders should identify programs, while the government assesses the needs of the poor in that community, and based on the availability of natural resources in the area, assists in the planning and designing of poverty alleviation programs. Part of planning a program should incorporate equipping the poor with the right tools, and training them on the use of modern farm input and labor saving technology. These will ensure the sustenance of programs, because it would have address the problem and aspiration of the poor, as well as given the poor confidence in the management structure of government (Mikkelsen, 1995). The present practice makes the poor feel alienated.

Other things will be for the government to ensure that: Every policy make by the government should go through the process of public voting by the general public before it is implemented. The problem of a general uniformed program for the whole country needs to be re-addressed, programs need to be planned and carried out on a case by case bases (Foster, Fozzard, Naschold, & Conway, 2002), taking into consideration the nature and human resource available in every area in the country.

The fourth and an important recommendation as seen by this study is what Payne, Devol and Smith (2001) call the “culture of poverty.” Although her work in the book Bridges out of Poverty talks about the culture of poverty in the United States, this researcher observed from data from interview conducted, and personal observation of participants, the same culture exists among poor people in Nigeria, the phenomenon called poverty, and experiences of people in poverty are the same in many societies. In their contribution to the universality of the culture of poverty, Pilisuk and Pilisuk (1971), talked about the ideological and psychological traits that exist in the culture of poverty, stressing the point that the ideas of the culture of poverty cut
across different societies, and also makes problems that look distinctively existing and belonging to one particular culture to exist and also belong to another culture. The government in Nigeria needs to know the concept of the culture of people in poverty. It is very important for policy makers in Nigeria to know “the culture of generational poverty, its hidden rules and belief system, and the degree of emotional labor involved for people to transit from poverty.” Equally important for the Government to know is the fact that leaving poverty is a process and not an event.” (Payne 2001) an effective poverty alleviation programs must look at the ideological and psychological traits that exist in this culture of poverty. According to Pilisuk and Pilisuk, traits that exist in the culture of poverty includes among other things a “strong feelings of marginalization, of helplessness, dependences, and sense of not belonging, Nigerian poor feel marginalize in their own country. There is a general feeling of powerlessness, a widespread feeling of inferiority; they know only their troubles, and their way of life.” (1971).

Getting people with these feelings out of poverty according to Payne et al (2001) will involve long series of steps. At the moment it appears that the Nigerian government does not have this understanding about people in poverty, and the process it will take to get the poor in Nigeria out of poverty mentality. This study will suggest that the first step towards taking poor people out of poverty mentality in Nigeria will be for the government to try and develop trust between it and the poor. Presently, the government and the people they represent and make policy for, are operating from different levels in the same society. According to Payne et al, (2001) every class has mental models that guilds their lives, and these are what Payne calls the “hidden rules of a class.” They further explains that, while to the working middle class persons what are important are achievements, career, assets, family, club, interest and many more issues that point towards success in life. To the poor person, “relationships,” and not achievements comes first and foremost. “Relationships with families and friends are like the wheels that keep the poor moving every day. According to Payne et al, (2001) Money is used for entertainments and not investment. This was among observation made by a participant, who talked about how some beneficiaries get resource from the government and use it for drugs, his remark, “No because some people use their money to take drugs, but others used theirs very well, in that they even went back to school. But had to drop when the money stopped coming from government, and they all went back to the street” (RT1)
Dropping out of school shows how less importance is attached to success; the poor may have no motivation, or the drive to want to succeed (Payne et al 2001). The working class needs to teach the poor the virtue of success. Part of poverty alleviation policy should include some kind of mentoring by the educated, rich and working class to the poor.

The theory about hidden rules by Payne is supported by Oscar Lewis theory of “the culture of poverty.” In his explanation about the culture of poverty, he claims that poverty is a part of a group’s culture, and a way of life that is passed down from one generation to another in a family. This theory justifies the perpetuation of poverty from one generation to another, because people are born in poor families, and find it difficult to break the cycle of poverty. Instead, poverty is been passed from one generation to another. The poverty situation in Nigeria fits in to this theory. Some people are product of third generation poverty because their grandparents lived and raised their parents farming, with just enough to feed the family, subsequently, their fathers inherited the same piece of land, and farmed the same way their fathers did, a third generation son born into this family may end up doing the same thing, farming on the same piece of land from his grandfather. This may continue and keep the cycles of poverty going on from one generation to another. Education is seen as the way that some generations have been able to change their destiny and that of their children. The importance and benefits of education cannot be overemphasized, since education is a vital tool that transforms people or a nation, with more than half of the population of Nigeria being illiterate, and living below the poverty level, education should be part of policy of all poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. The government should focused its attention on ensuring that skill education is encouraged and provided freely in the country, education curriculum should be tailored towards teaching technical and manufacturing skills.

An atmosphere should be created by government for investors to come to the country and invest, while making sure that the security situation in the country is conducive for foreign investment. All necessary infrastructures should be provided to attract investors. The government should make sure that investors and industries that will employ these students when they graduate from school are in place.

Another important issue will be training and carrying out research about poverty alleviation programs before policy decisions are made or before they are implemented. All
intended programs to be carried out as poverty alleviation programs should be well researched in the country like is done in other part of the world. An example of a well researched program is the Butler county success program that is being researched for six years now, before a policy will be formulated on how the government in the United States can help children from poor homes via the use of school liaisons in the schools. A culture of researching programs must be developed in the country; both implementers who work in the field and intended beneficiaries of programs need to be trained in programs that will be carried out. This will help the beneficiaries with questions they may have, as well as giving them ideas about how to use the resources they collect from government. If implementers’ who will be in the field are not trained on how to handle programs, how can they assist beneficiaries when they need help about a program? This no doubt shows the importance of training and re-training before, and when programs are carried out.

Conclusion

The fight against poverty is one that is all-encompassing. Government alone cannot fight and win; both government and the people need to explore the physical and psychological resources over time in order to subdue poverty. This fight against poverty will be one that will start from the mind of the people, combines with the flow and availability of resources. The best strategies for poverty reduction or eradication in Nigeria will emphasize empowerment that will teach the poor how to create wealth for themselves and by themselves. And the need for people in government to know that leadership is a responsibility that goes beyond an individual, or a group.

The family is central in the study of family and child studies. The study of poverty and efforts towards its alleviation in Nigeria should be very important to family scientist, since Society is made up of members of various family unites, and members of these families form the back born of every society. Therefore a comprehensive study of family and child studies must be one that understand the role of socio- economic status of families, and how it affect the psychological, mental and physical well been of individuals within any given society. The issue of poverty in Nigeria become very important, because it enables researcher understand the dynamic that are at play in the Nigerian society, and what the government can do to help alleviate the poverty situation in the country.
Implication for further research

There is need to carry out intensive research on the three growing issues that have shown evidence of alarming growth in Nigeria. These three issues are poverty, tribal conflict, and political instability. These are all issues considered by this research as by product of poverty. There is need for more research to be carried out to see how poverty has fueled these problems over the years.

Secondly, a research should be carried out on why privately organized poverty alleviation programs seem to be successful, while those organized by government are failing, despite 50 years of government carrying out poverty alleviation programs.
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The Chief Executive,
Poverty Alleviation program,
Abuja.

Sir,

My name is Roseline Jindori Yunusa; I am a Graduate student from Miami University Oxford, in OH, USA. I am doing a research on poverty alleviation programs and how they have fared over the years. This is not a fault finding research work, but rather a way to contribute towards making poverty alleviation more successful in Nigeria. This letter aims at introducing the researcher and to request that your organization give me the list of participants or beneficiaries of the various poverty alleviation programs you have carried out, I will like to contact them personally. It is important to state here that participation on this research work is voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time; Refusal to participants will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to any participant. Participants are equally free to refuse answering any question they are not comfortable with. A consent form will be given to all participants on this research work, the consent form is a requirement of this research, and it serves as willingness to freely participants on the research work

I look forward to working with your beneficiaries. You can contact Roseline Yunusa the researcher with any questions you might have, I will be more than happy to address your concerns. My email is yunusarj@muohio.edu or phone number 5133629978.or Feel free to contact the supervisor of this research work Dr Sellers Sherrill. L. PhD by email at, sellersl@muohio.edu, and for questions about your rights as a research participant please contact the office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at humansubjects@muohio.edu, or by phone on 513-529-3600

Thank you very much for your participation.

Roseline Yunusa
APPENDIX; B

Consent Letter to Participants
This consent letter is meant to make it very clear that your participation on this research work is voluntary, you are under no obligation what so ever, to participants or continue with your participation at any time before or during the interview, your refusal to participants will involve no penalty. You can decline to answer questions you are uncomfortable with without penalty. You are also been assured that your participation in the research have put you in no risk of been victims or denied from further participation on poverty alleviation program by either the staff or organization that handle poverty alleviation program. It is important that you know, that none information will be release to any persons either in Nigeria or outside the country.

Please contact me Roseline unused at yunusarij@muohio.edu with any concerns about this research work or you can address further concern to the supervisor of this research, Dr Sellers Sherrill. L. PhD by email at, sellersl@muohio.edu, or the office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at humansubjects@muohio.edu, or by phone on 513-529-3600.

Thank you very much

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Signature of subject                                                                    Date
APPENDIX; C

RESEARCH QUESTION FOR BENEFICIARIES

1. How would you rate poverty alleviation programs generally in the country?

2. How many times have you participants in poverty alleviation programs?

3. How many times were you a part of decision making about poverty alleviation programs?

4. Which program did you like best?
   A. what did you like about it?

5. Which program did you not like,
   a. What didn’t you like?

6. Was there any form of training given to you about any of the program you participated in?

7. How often did you interact with officials of poverty alleviation ministry during any of the program?

8. Did you get any kind of help, be it question about what you are doing or solution to a problem you encountered while carrying out a program from officials of poverty alleviation program?

9. Is there some type of help that you need but that is not part of the poverty alleviation program you participated in?

10. What would you like policy makers to do differently about poverty alleviation programs?