PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA: A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Inequality is a phenomenon that cuts across all societies and all social spheres; to a very large extent, inequality affects the adequate functioning of the society. Over millennia, as society evolved, the patterns of inequality have also eaten deep into society. This paper investigates its universality and variability, the forms that it takes, and the unique features of inequality processes across social entities.It revealed that growing inequalities may be socially and psychologically disruptive, not just within a country but beyond national and global boundaries. Inequalities among people are inevitable because people are not born with the same abilities, attitudes and emotions;hence they occupy different social statutes and have different life chances. The advantaged people enjoy an inordinate share of income, wealth, and other valued resources while others struggle. Valued resources and desired outcomes are distributed unevenly in such a way that people have unequal amounts or access to the necessities of life. Consequently, social inequality cannot be exterminated in any society; it recognizes the power of economic and political elites to preserve an inequitable status quo. Hence, to achieve relative equality, it entails the removal of various barriers to human capabilities, freedom to acquire quality education, access to quality health care, and livelihood.This review paper examines the various patterns of inequalities from a social psychological perspective and measures by which social inclusiveness could be restored.

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Key Words: Inequality, Perspective, Psychological, Nigeria

Introduction

Inequality is a global phenomenon that cuts across all countries, regions, and states. It exists in all human societies as it recognizes the power of elites that preserve the status quo in the distribution of wealth and privileges' amongst others. People occupy different social status which creates a widening gap between the rich and the poor which in turn creates inequality. Even in developed and developing nations; inequality is present and stares up in every social situation. Social inequality is evident in the Nigerian society as it is manifested in relationships, especially in the institutions being patronized by members of the society, such as educational institutions, health care facilities, means of transportation, and residential accommodation as well as another similar social system. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) documented that income inequality is on the rise, the richest 10 percent earn up to 40 percent of the total global income while the poorest 10 percent earn between 2 to 7 percent of the total global income. In developing nations, the rate of inequality has increased by 11 percent between 1990 and 2010(UNDP, 2017).

In 2015, the global communities adopted a universal set of goals to end poverty, inequality, injustice, protect the environment and ensure prosperity by 2030; these sustainable development goals have specific targets to be achieved. Goal 10 of SDG centers on reducing inequality within and among countries; it was targeted to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of the outcome by 2030 and also to progressively achieve sustained income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average. The global survey conducted by United Nations Development Programme revealed that policymakers around the world acknowledged that inequalities in developed countries are generally high and are also a threat to the long and short term social and economic development (UNDP, 2017).

The rate of inequality across the globe differs as theSDG Atlas (2018) showed that there is a great inequality across countries and regions of the world. North America is 3.5 times richer than the world average but its relative income per capita has been falling while by contrast, the relative incomes are rising in South Asia, East Asia, and Pacific. From 1990 to 2016, North America has been at the top in terms of relative GDP per capita while Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia are at the base. One simple way to measure inequality within a country is to consider the share of people living below 50 percent of its median income while changes in inequality aremeasured by the relative income growth of the poorest 40 percent of the people. In Peru, from 2009 to 2014, the average income growth for the population was 3.1 percent but the income of the poorest

40 percent grew faster at 5.8 percent, in 34 countries, income growth among the poorest was slower than average (SDG Atlas, 2018).

In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, income inequality is at its highest level in the last fifty years. The average income of the richest 10 percent of the population is about nine times that of the poorest 10 percent. It has been documented that the drivers of inequalities across the world include globalization, skilled biased technological change, and inappropriate changes in countries' policy initiatives (ascendancy of neo-liberalism) (OECD, 2014).The Human Development Report (2019) revealed that Nigeria is placed at a low human development category and is positioned at 158 out of 189 countries and territories. As of 2018, the human development Index for Nigeria is 0.534 which is significantly low as compared to the developed nations. However, the HDI of Nigeria is above the average of 0.467 for countries in the low development group and also above the average of 0.541 for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This therefore masks the inequality in the distribution of human development across the population at the country's level.

The poverty problem in the country is viewed as partly a feature of high levels of inequality which manifests in highly unequal income distribution and differential access to job opportunities, education, basic infrastructures, health care andtrainings. Sustained high overall inequality reflects a widening income gap and access to economic and social opportunities between gender, growing inequalities between and within rural and urban populations, and widening gaps between the federating unit's economies. The major causes of Nigeria's poverty go beyond low incomes, savings, and growth, which are usually associated with poor countries to include high levels of inequality attributes, basic infrastructure, poor education and health status among the component units of the country. The fact is that many Nigerians are living below the poverty line and the country is characterized by massive unemployment, even among educated youth. This problem has made many Nigerians poor and frustrated and which has even culminated into so many vices particularly crimes in the form of armed robbery, kidnapping – for – ransom, cattle rustling and militancy, to mention a few. The effect of inequality has also made Nigerian youth more susceptible to recruitment by deviant groups such as insurgents and other groups of criminals.

It is interesting to note that the huge gap between the rich and poor in Nigeria is anchored on inequality in incomedistribution of workers. The payment of N18,000 minimum wages and the disparity between the rich andpoor has heightened the various patterns of inequality. In a similar vein, despite the growth in the Nigerian economywhich is being driven by non-oil sectors, inequality has continued to rise.The major challenge facing the economy is increased inequality as only ten percent of the population enjoys the benefits of economic growth which is highly concentrated in certain regions of the economy (Human Development Report, 2016).

Osunde (2017) in his study on understanding inequalities in North-East and South-West Regions of Nigeria argued that the difference in the structure of labour market is responsible for the higher level of inequality in the north-east and south-west, Nigeria. There is an unequal distribution of income amongst the two regions; the source of earning inequality in the south west region is from capital income while contributions of farm income accounts for the north east earning inequality. The implication of income inequality is that it concentrates the power to take political decisions in the hands of a few individual that could ignite suboptimal use of human resources and political instability. Inequality increases the influence of the rich and decreases the income of the poor. Although certain level of inequality might not be a challenge if it meets needs such as provision of incentives for people to excel, compete, save and invest in facilities geared towards attaining stability in life. Inequality can also influence growth via provision of incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship. That would allow some individual an opportunity to accumulate minimumresources needed to start businesses and get a good education(Dabla-norris, Kochhar, Suphaphiphat, Ricka and Tsounta, 2015). That was also reflected in the summation that the wealth of Nigeria's richest five could end poverty in the nation. It also brought to lime light the fact that the nation's resources are concentrated in the hands of a few individual(Runse, 2017).

It is therefore pertinent to look into inequality through the lens of social-psychology focusing on the patterned distributions of power, resources, and privileges among defined sets of actors who are organized in social categoriesin relations to their hierarchy and dominance in the social structure. Social psychology seems especially well suited to analyze inequality. Because the field focuses on relationships between individuals and their social environments, it seems self-evident that actors' social structural position (e.g., their location in the hierarchies of race, gender, class, sexuality, age, and/or nationality) is an important focus of the discipline. Indeed, inequality is one of sociology's most central concerns; thus it seems logical that sociologist and social psychologists address it.

Overview of Global Patterns of Inequality

Global inequality is defined as the inequality among all persons in the world irrespective of their country of residence; during a period of rapidly increasing global integration, some of the poorest economies were growing rapidly, thus raising average living standards, but many of the same countries also experienced increasing inequality within their borders.Poverty and shared prosperity (2016) revealed that global inequality increased from the industrial revolution through the 1980s; globalinequality is wider today than it was in the 1820s, despite the recent reduction. Similarly, most of the recent reduction in global inequality derives from the convergence ofincome among countries mostly because of the rapid growth in populous developing countries,notably China and India.In 2013, seven out of 10 people lived in countries where economic inequality is worse than 30 years ago. In 2015, 80 people owned as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity – 3.5 billion people share between them the same amount of wealth as those 80 wealthiest people. Such extreme inequality stands in the way of ending global poverty, and widens other inequalities like the gap between women and men. The gap between rich and poor is spiraling out of control. Just 80 individuals have the same wealth as half the people on our planet. Such extreme economic inequality hurts everyone, damaging economic growth, fuelling crime, and standing in the way of ending global poverty (Oxfam Report, 2014-2015). Such stark inequality is not inevitable: it is the result of political and economic choices. The rules are rigged in favor of the rich at the expense of the many while the wealth and power of the few grows, the poorest are left behind.

Rashbrooke (2013) noted that there are sharp increases in inequality in developed countries since the late 1970s, especially in the United States but also in other Anglo countries (including New Zealand). Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) pulls together evidence on social and health costs of inequality, under the headings of life expectancy, child mortality, obesity, homicides, imprisonment rates, mental illness, teenage births, social mobility and trust. Using samples of more than 20 “advanced” economies and the fifty US states (the social mobility index is excluded for US states), it finds that the levels on all these variables correlate fairly closely with levels of income inequality, much closer than with average income. (It measures inequality as aftertax-and-benefit income of the richest 20 percent over the poorest 20 percent, or the Gini coefficient.) The striking finding is not just that health and social problems are more frequent among the poorer people in the more unequal societies; the overall burden of these problems is much higher in the more unequal societies (Wade, 2014).

Lawrence Katz's recent research finds that US generational educational inequality is higher than almost all other industrialized countries, measured as the inverse of the percentage of adults who have a higher level of education than their parents; and that educational inequality has increased (the proportion with education at higher levels than parents is lowest in the 25- 34 year old cohort) (Katz, 2014; Porter, 2014)**.** Research across European countries also finds a high degree of representational bias in favour of the wealthy. But it is typically less than in America, the difference probably reflecting more public financing for candidates, parties and media in Europe and therefore somewhat less dependence on private donors (Rosset et al., 2011; Mandle, 2004). On both sides of the Atlantic we seem to be caught in a vicious circle, such that economic inequality generates inequality of governmental responsiveness, producing policies which favour the wealthy and disfavour poorer citizens, most of the time (Bartels, 2008; Hager, 2009).

Wealth concentrated in the hands of a few reinforces institutional arrangements that keep sluicing pre-tax incomes upwards, often by enabling interlocking elites to create self-serving arrangements for themselves (far from "free markets"). Think of the elite networks of Wall Street, Washington, big agriculture, big energy, big universities (Brooks, 2014; Wedel, 2009). These privilege-protecting networks extend far beyond national boundaries, and coordinate national politics to advance the interests of the owners and managers of capital in high profits and low taxes, everywhere (Wade, 2014). Another pattern of inequality lies in the expanding acceptability of tax avoidance and wealth concealment. Rich people at London dinner parties boast that they pay almost no tax anywhere; and their tax lawyers boast that they can ensure this result with no risk of penalties (Personal communications, June 2014). They seem entirely untroubled by the social implications of their actions.

The key lesson from Piketty's book reveals that at present and likely future levels of income and wealth concentration, capitalism is losing its core claim to legitimacy – that it provides incentives for hard work, entrepreneurialism and innovation while at the same time it defends individual liberties and ensures a sufficiently equal distribution of material benefits to sustain a social compact between classes and protection to those near the bottom of the income scale. The evidence is fairly clear that income concentration at or above present Anglo levels tends to depress economic growth; worsens public health and a range of social problems across the society, not just among the poor; and strengthens political capture by the rich, whose policy preferences tend to reinforce income inequality. The evidence is also fairly clear that inequality can be reduced without the societal costs of doing so outweighing the societal benefits (Wade, 2014). Similarly, it has been noted that inequalities in access to the control of natural resources and political power are a major cause of conflict and political instability in Nigeria (Afegbua 2010, cited in Adeyeri, 2014). There is a disparity in the structure of power relations in the world of employment between the owners and managers of capital and the rest. One does not have to be a Marxist to see that these power relations in production are a prime cause of pre-tax income distribution and to Ewetan and Uche (2014) a major factor that contributes to insecurity in Nigeria is the growing awareness of inequalities and disparities in life chances that lead to violent reactions by a large number of people. The perception of marginalization held by a growing number of groups in the country has its roots in perceived economic and political inequalities.

Aigbokan (2017) argued that gender inequality in terms of opportunities and outcomes has also been high and widening in Nigeria. Gender disparity in terms of educational enrolment and attainment is skewed against females. Access to politically elected and appointed positions, as well as access to resources for the establishment of enterprises and entrepreneurs, is more restricted for women. The country has, therefore, paid and is still paying a price for prevailing inequalities. This includes high recorded economic growth that is non-inclusive, lack of progress in poverty reduction, less than optimum growth and development occasioned by less than optimum development and utilization of human capital, civil conflicts, and militancy and political instability and slow consolidation of democracy. All these impacts negatively on the growth of the economy. Inequality matters for achieving the goal of equity, but also for other reasons. The vicious circle of inequality makes addressing it imperative. Inequality is the cause and consequence of the failure of the market system as well as the political system and contributes to the instability of our economic and political systems, which in turn contributes to increased inequality. Some have argued that some level of inequality is desirable to sustain an appropriate incentive structure in the economy, or simply because inequality in income reflects different talents and effort among individuals. It is expected that the benefits of economic progress would with time trickle-down to the low-income groups (Aigbokan, 2017).

Current State of Inequality in Nigeria: Socio-psychological Perspective

According to Ubong, (2013) inequality is defined as the expression of lack of access to education, housing, health care, status, employment opportunities among others. It could also connote the exclusion of workers from equal participation in what society perceives as being valuable, essential, and socially desirable. Certain reasons give rise to inequality; they include inequality in wages and salaries, wealth concentration in the hands of a few individuals or institutions which lead to a growing gap between the rich and poor (Nwobi**,** 2018). In Nigeria, the uneven distribution of income (wages and salaries, allowances) has always been an issue of serious concern in the various regions of the country. Interestingly, when workers' do not possess the same level of material wealth or overall living economic conditions, it becomes inequality of outcome. That was reflected in standards of living like inequality in income/wealth, education, health, and nutrition. In the same perspective, economic inequality connotes how economic variables are shared among workers or individuals in a system (Afonso, Lafleur and Alarcon, 2015). In a nutshell, inequality from the above is encapsulated as a lack of equal access to material well-being and income or an uneven distribution of allocations.

The Oxfam report (2017) on inequality in Nigeria clearly stated that the scale of inequality in Nigeria is extreme, the report indicates that poverty situation in Nigeria is very high and that the country is among the 30 most unequal countries in the world. As of 2010, more than 112 million people were living in poverty. According to the 2015 Human Development Report, Nigeria had the highest number of people living in multidimensional poverty (88.4 million) in the world, followed by Pakistan (83 million) and Ethiopia (78.9 million) (Igbuzor, 2017).

Over the past 40 years, the gap between the rich and the poor has been growing in developed and developing countries alike (Oxfam, 2014). In 2015, just 62 people had as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity, and the richest one percent owned more wealth than the rest of the world combined. At the same time, the poorest people are being denied their fair share: since the turn of the century, the poorest half of the world's population has received just one percent of the total increase in global wealth (Oxfam, 2016). In Nigeria, the scale of economic inequality has reached extreme levels, and it finds expression in the daily struggles of the majority of the population in the face of accumulation of obscene amounts of wealth by a small number of individuals while more than 112 million people were living in poverty in 2010 (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The richest Nigerian man will take 42 years to spend all of his wealth at 1 million per day. According to Oxfam's calculations, the amount of money that the richest Nigerian man can earn annually from his wealth is sufficient to lift 2 million people out of poverty for one year. Lifting all Nigerian people living below the extreme poverty line of $1.90 out of poverty for one year will cost about $24 billion. This amount of money is just lower than the total wealth owned overall by the five richest Nigerians in 2016, which was equal to $29.9 billion (Oxfam Report, 2017).

According to the report of Oxfam, (2017), the gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria is very wide and World Bank data showed that the poorest half of the population held only 22 percent of national income (Oxfam, 2017). Similarly, Nigerian lawmakers are one of the best paid in the world: the average annual salary is $118,000 equivalent to 63 times the country's per capita (in 2013)So, we have "the world's highest-paid lawmakers preside over some of its poorest people"(Igbuzor, 2017). The report points out that the annual economic growth averaged over 7 % in the 2000s (World Bank, 2013). But the paradox is that as the country gets richer, only a few benefits and the majority continue to suffer from poverty and deprivation.Aigbokan (2017) argued that the National Human Development Report for Nigeria 2016shows that women are disproportionately under-represented in the national assembly.In the house of the senate, women account for less than 10%, being 2.8% in 1999 and only rising to 7.3% in 2015. In the House of Representatives, the ratio is even less, rising from 1.9% in 1999to 7.5% in 2007 and collapsed to 3.9% in 2015. The ratio is further lower in State House of Assembly where it rose from 2.4% in 1999 to 6.9% in 2011 and 7.7% in 2015, Ministerial appointment at federal and state levels are male-dominated. Female federal cabinet ministers were 13.6, 11.4, 22.8, 20.5 and13.6percent in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 respectively. Aigbokan(2017) also noted that at the state level, gender inequality in educational attainment, labour force participation rate, and share of parliamentary seats all weigh against females. In educational attainment, it is 45% for females and 55% for males. In labour force participation, it was 64.5% and 70.3% respectively, and for parliamentary participation, it was 5.8% and 94.2% respectively.

Another interesting dimension is regional inequality between the regions and the states with poverty incidence being highest in the North West (71.4%), followed by North East at 69.1 % and North Central at 60.7 %. The South West has the lowest poverty rate at 49.8 % followed by the South-South (55.5%) and South East (59.5%). There is also gender inequality mediated through a myriad of discriminatory traditional and socio-cultural practices that put women at a disadvantage in several areas compared to men (Oxfam, 2017). The statistics are chilling: In Jigawa State, 94 % of women (against 42% of men) are illiterate (British Council, 2012). The low educational status of women is in some cases rooted in early marriage. This is further compounded by childbirth, which may be a physically traumatic experience for young mothers, perforating their reproductive organs and causing Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), where the young female is left with a continuous, involuntary discharge of urine. It is not uncommon for these young mothers to be abandoned by their husbands. At least 12,000 VVF cases are recorded annually in Nigeria (Akinola, 2019). As a result of these disadvantages, women are more likely to be poor than men and keep being excluded from full participation in the country's economic, social, and political life.

Nigeria has one of the lowest rates of female entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria is the country with the lowest share of female parliamentarians in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria is also at the top of the list of countries with the highest number of children out of school (10.1 million) (Igbuzor, 2017). This, therefore, shows the level of disparity across the various regions. Social inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through norms of allocation, that engender specific patterns along lines of socially defined categories of persons. It is the differentiation preference of access to social goods in the society brought about by power, religion, kinship, prestige, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class. Social rights include the labour market, the source of income, health care, and freedom of speech, education, political representation, and participation (Wade, 2014).

Inequalities in access to assets, participation in the workforce, and entrepreneurship opportunities push women into the informal sector. Survey results show that the share of women in non-agricultural employment in sub-Sahara Africa is about 66% of all female employment, Clark (2016). There is a high economic loss when women are not integrated more fully into the national economy. It is estimated that total annual economic losses due to gender gaps between 2010 and 2014 could exceed $90billion in sub-Sahara Africa, peaking at about $105billion in 2014(UNDP, 2016a). These results confirm that Africa is missing its full growth potential because a sizeable portion of its growth reserve is not fully utilized. With the level of gender inequality in

Nigeria observed above, it can be inferred that its growth has been less than optimal (Aigbokan, 2017).

Main Drivers of Inequality in Nigeria

The Oxfam Report (2017) identified the main drivers of poverty and inequality in Nigeria to include the following:

1. **Retrogressive Taxation**: In Nigeria, the poor are taxed heavily and the rich and big multinational receive questionable tax waivers, tax holidays, and loopholes for tax avoidance. The tax system is largely regressive: the burden of taxation mostly falls on poorer companies and individuals. On one side, big multinationals receive questionable tax waivers and tax holidays and utilize loopholes in tax laws to shift huge profits generated in the country to low tax jurisdictions. In some cases, these tax waivers have been captured by the economic and political elite and used expressly to garner political patronage. It has been estimated that every year Nigeria loses $2.9 billion of potential revenues to questionable tax incentives. This is equal to about 13 three times the country's total health budget in 2015. Other revenues are lost because some companies shift profits to shell offices in tax havens and countries with low tax rates. A recent investigation found that between 2010 and 2013 a major telecom company had transferred N37.6bn (about $119 million) of profits generated in Nigeria to its Dubai office where it had very negligible operations, to avoid appropriate tax aligned to profit levels made from the country. On the other side, to meet their revenue generation targets, the government – especially at the state level – opts for aggressive taxation of the informal sector, sometimes imposing erratic taxes according to needs. As a consequence, small and medium enterprises and men and women in the informal sector face multiple taxations accompanied in some cases by human rights violations (Oxfam, 2017).

2. **Poor Budgeting System and Allocation**: The share of government budget which is allocated to education, health, and social protection (three critical policy areas to tackle poverty and inequality) are among the lowest in Africa. For example, in 2012, 6.5 % of the budget was allocated to education, 3.5 % to health, and 6.7 % to social protection (in 2010). By comparison, in Ghana, these shares were respectively 18.5 % (in 2015), 13.8 % (in 2015) and 9.1 % (in 2010). The result is that from 2005 to 2015, a total of N77 trillion was appropriated through budgets towards the development of the

country, yet the state of roads, electricity and water supply, schools and hospitals remain inadequate to meet even the basic needs for a large part of the population (Oxfam, 2017).

3. **Poor Resource Management and Poor Policy Implementation**: The resources allocated to provide services to citizens are poorly managed lead to service failures. This led to a situation documented in a case study in the report where Eno, an 18 years woman who could not afford hospital services was delivered by a traditional birth attendant and was "detained by the midwife for over a week until she paid the N1,000 ($5) delivery fee."The public resources that the government manages to collect are often spent unfairly and inefficiently. This translates into a lack of access to basic services for the majority of the population and poor outcomes in human development. The shares of government budget allocated to education, health, and social protection are among the lowest in the region. For example, in 2012, 6.5% of the budget was allocated to education, 3.5% to health and 6.7% to social protection in 2010; By comparison, in Ghana, these shares were, respectively, 18.5% (in 2015), 13.8% (in 2015) and 9.1% (in 2010). Public institutions have been unable to use the limited resources available in an effective way. For example, 57 million of Nigeria's estimated population of 170 million people lack access to safe water, and over 130 million citizens are without access to adequate sanitation. Nigeria is also at the top 15 of the list of countries with the highest number of children out of school. (Oxfam, 2017).Despite the allocation of large amounts of funds from multiple sources for the region's development since 1999, the local communities still live in dire conditions, including environmental pollution and degradation, gas flaring, acid rain, lack of infrastructure low levels of human development. Another consequence of the mismanagement of the nation's resources is the high rate of unemployment, especially among the young (Oxfam, 2017).

4. **Elite Capture, Cronyism and Favouritism**: Elite capture of public sector policies and resources undermines the productivity of the most important sectors of the economy and prevents the fair distribution of the benefits of growth. For instance, "the mismanagement of the $16 billion appropriated to improve electricity supply during the 8 years of the Obasanjo regime from 1999 to 2006." On NDDC, the report documents that "often, rogue contractors discard the projects, in collusion with political leaders and NDDC officials." Elite capture of public sector resources undermines the efficiency of the economy and prevents the fair distribution of the benefits of development. This is

especially notable in agriculture and the oil sector. Agriculture is the main source of non-oil exports and employs almost half of the Nigerian population. However, unfavourable policies have prevented small, poor farmers from benefiting from agricultural growth. For example, import quotas introduced to encourage investments in the rice value chain and meant for investors with rice-milling capacity were instead issued to cronies, who in turn sold them to larger traders and corporations. This pushed down the market price of rice, harming millers and rice farm owners whom the measure was originally meant to favour (Oxfam, 2017).

5. **Prohibitive Cost of Governance and Income Inequality**: The cost of governance is very high and the expenditure is made to benefit a few. As stated in the report, the ruling class constituted by the few establishes and legitimizes an exploitative property system through which it determines the allocation of opportunities, income and wealth, relying on the use of state power, including the use of oppressive state agents such as the police and armed forces. Nineteen years into Nigeria's democracy, budget analysis regularly shows the dynamics of wealth distribution in Nigeria: the high cost of maintaining small political elite in office comes at the detriment of the majority of poor Nigerians. Several issues account for Nigeria's bloated public sector and the high recurrent component of the budget. It includes an excessive number of advisers and senior advisers, assistants, and personal assistants to political office holders, Mammoth salaries and allowances which are commonplace for holders of political office and a significant number of official vehicles and numerous foreign trips for political office holders and civil servants (Oxfam, 2017).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is pertinent to change the current orthodoxy that inequality is acceptable and inevitable by strengthening citizen and civil society voice, and helping galvanize policy and practice changes that can reverse economic, gender, and social inequalities which include providing: free public health and education for everyone so the poor are not left behind; decent wages for all workers; progressive taxation so the rich pay their fair share, and political voice for all, including the poorest. History shows that the stranglehold of elites can be broken by the actions of ordinary people and the widespread demand for progressive policies. Reversing economic, political, and gender inequalities requires empowering citizens, especially women to hold government offices, and the private sector to account for how revenue is raised and spent. As more women, men, girls, and boys exercise their universal rights, they will demand changes to the systems that have led to inequality explosion (Oxfam, 2017).

The review and works of literature have shown that the shortcoming in the provision of basic services, as well as many years of mismanagement of public resources, has contributed immensely to the various patterns of inequalities. Because of this, the study recommends that the government should improve on the rule of law and transparency in governance to ensure the equitable distribution of resources across the various regions and states in the country. The rules on tax can be changed to make sure that the rich pay their fair share. Increased spending on public health and education is possible to give poor people a fighting chance. We can demand fair wages for everyone. We can make also sure the poorest are heard by those in power. The negative influence arising from corruption manifests in misallocation and mismanagement of scarce resources which invariably reduces investment and growth and this negatively affects human development. The government should therefore improve the access and quality of physical infrastructure such as a good network of roads, water, communication technology, electricity across the states. These will in no small measure reduce the level of inequality among the different states in Nigeria. This study also recommends that there is a need to grant workers access to reasonable purchasing power that meets with competing demands of the society to address the problem of income inequality. This purchasing power must address certain living conditions like housing, transportation, health, feeding, communication, cost of education and utilities. Similarly, the study also recommends that there should be a review of the salaries of all public office holders with a target of cutting down unreasonable entitlements which will lead to an increase in the salaries of the common man. A large proportion of low-income households reside in rural areas. Expansion ofnon-farm income opportunities in rural areas would also aid reduction in ruralincome inequality and thus overall national income inequality.Women empowerment and increased access and opportunities for womenwould aid reduction in gender disparities and loss of human capitaldevelopment potentials. Deliberate policies to create ease of access to credit are required to create more female entrepreneurs and enterprises that have strong potential for reducing inequalities.

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