

## LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES IN PEACE BUILDING: LESSONS ACROSS NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

In the African traditional societies no man exploited another man's labour. Poverty was also not life threatening. The internalization of norms and values through socialization was what guided community members in their daily interactions. It is unfortunate that poverty is attributed to laziness when most of the forces creating poverty are essentially social in origin therefore can be reversed; Members of a society generally, share a common language which facilitates day to day activities. Peace relates to an individual's, state of mind which is holistic in nature. The study used six-tier model structure to describe the social and economic inequalities in the Nigerian society. Social mobility was discussed; the reasons for upward social mobility and downward social mobility were discussed too. Functionalist theory and conflict theory were reviewed and conflict theory was adopted as the theoretical frame work of the study. The consequence of social and economic inequalities included: malnutrition, denial of education, social Isolation and the effects of poverty etc. The sources of conflict included: modernization, non-observation of rule of law, ethnicity, modern social control, religious differences, fair of domination and urbanization. Solution to conflict resolution included: equitable revenue allocation, national conference, gender equality, poverty alleviation programmes. The conclusion was that poor governance was responsible for Nigeria's undesirable situation. Globalization has widened the disparity between the reach and the poor. The study recommended that poverty is less a failure of the poor than failure of policy maker to grasp their potential. We should therefore seek to forge a closer connection between the issue of poverty and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** language, peace, conflict, peace building, inequalities

### **Introduction**

In the African traditional societies there were no social and economic equality between societal members. The cream of the traditional society were Rain Makers, Diviners, Medicine Men, Traditional Priest, Local Warriors and those who hold Chieftaincy Titles, etc. These people were respected more than the ordinary societal members. The fact remains that none of them exploited another man's labour and poverty was then not life threatening.

The ambition of brothers and sisters was to carry along one another in their daily socio-economic activities. This reduces the negative effects of poverty hence also reducing family conflicts giving room for peace to reign in families since there was love and justice which are the prerequisite for peaceful co-existence among community members.

In reality no society has achieved complete social and economic equality. Social and economic inequalities in African traditional societies were not life threatening like in contemporary Nigeria because man is no longer his brother's keeper following individualism brought by capitalism into the African traditional societies. Then community life was communal in nature and nobody was allowed to convert others as labourers. Today the story is different because man is on his own.

The internalization of norms and values through socialization was what guided community members in their daily interactions with others. Traditional oath was taken by forefathers that nobody will see to the down fall of other community members. This helped to reduce conflict and peace reigned until capitalism was introduced and it gave rise to individualism. Man started looking for another man's labour to exploit.

One school of thought blame people who are socio economically disadvantaged for their own inability to succeed because of laziness and lack of ambition to succeed. Lewis (1961) concluded that the poor become trapped in a culture of poverty, a low class sub culture that destroys people's ambition making them to accept poverty. Unfortunately, the language of social and economic inequality is derived from this view point. Counter view: It is unfortunate that poverty is attributed to laziness most of the forces creating poverty are essentially social. They reflect systems of resource allocations that are made by societies and as such can be reversed. Pricing policies, credit systems, social and productive services which neglect the poor, as well as gender discrimination, are not natural, universal and inevitable facts and neither is the poverty they give rise to.

Language is an element of culture that sets humans apart from other species. Members of a society generally share a common language, which facilitates day to day exchanges with others. Language is the foundation of every culture. It is an abstract system of word meanings and symbols for all aspects of culture. People invariably depend on language for the use and transmission of the rest of a culture from generation to generation.

## **Peace Study**

The orderly arrangement of something is its peace. Peace relates to individual's state of mind, it is also situation in which ideal society will operate in harmony, security, unity and understanding. According to Adeniyi (2016):

The United Nations was established with the primary responsibility of maintaining world peace and security and in this way propagates this culture of peace. To this end both state and non-state actors, researchers, and academicians were spurred to explore ways and means of achieving peace and resolution of conflict peacefully through peace education instead of resorting to war or armed conflict.

Achu (2017) accounted for the importance of Peace Building as follows:

- It helps to prevent conflict from escalating
- It creates security and stability in the community
- It restores sanity and harmonious living in the land
- A driving force for sustainable peace and development in the aftermath of conflict
- It helps to build peace in the mind of the people since war starts in the mind.
- It captures a programme of the Rs. which are reconstruction, reformation and reconciliation when effectively implemented and this goes a long way in healing the wound of the war.

There are reasons for studying peace and conflict resolution as highlighted by Adeniyi (2016):

- i. It enables one to examine the causes and prevention of war.
- ii. It enables students and researchers to examine the nature of violence, oppression, discrimination, marginalization, gender inequality etcetera as well as the factors that exacerbate or trigger conflict.
- iii. It enables students to have the knowledge about non-violent strategies in resolving conflict and its application on the day activities and during human interaction.
- iv. It also aims at teaching students about how to resist violence through promoting principle of human freedom, dignity, equality and rule of law amongst others....

## **Six-Tier Model of Class Structure in Capitalist Societies**

According to Hensln (2010) quoting Gilbert and Kahli (1998) they structured a six-tier model of class division in industrial societies. The terms social and economic inequalities simply refer to the existence of socially created

inequalities. Sociologists use income, education and occupational prestige to measure social class.

1. **The Capitalist Class:** Sitting on the top of the class ladder is powerful elite that consist of just 1 percent of the Nigeria population. They own the means of production. This capitalist class is so wealthy that it owns 1/3 of all the nation's assets. They have direct access to top politicians and their decision open or close job opportunity for millions of people. They even have to shape the consciousness of the nation. Some include Aliku Dangote, Jumoh Ibrahim and Femi Adenuga etc.
2. **Upper Middle Class:** The upper middle class is the most shaped by education among all classes. Almost all members of this class have at least a bachelor's degree and may have post graduate degrees. This people manage the corporations owned by the capitalist class or else operate their own business or profession. They include Group Managing Directors of multi-national companies. They also include senior Doctors, Lawyers and Engineers that is those who have succeeded exceptional in their chosen profession. They include Managing Directors of viable cooperate organizations.
3. **Lower Middle Class:** Members of this class have jobs in which they follow others by the members of the upper middle class. With their technical and lower level management positions they can afford a main stream life style although they struggle to maintain it. They include high class civil servants, they also include district managers or managers or viable organizations. They include professionals practicing their profession well.
4. **The working class:** They are a class of relatively unskilled blue cola and white cola workers. They have lower education and lower income. Their jobs are also less secured more routine and more closely monitored. They always fear being laid off during recession. In Nigeria, because of disparity between federal workers, state workers and private workers. Many teachers and civil servants fall under this group despite their first or even second degree. This is because of the policy of the government workers are now receiving living wage. They pay workers whatever they like and those who protest face the risk of dismissal from their work. They also include artisans.
5. **The working poor:** This class is unskilled low paying temporary and sessional job holders, most of which are school drop outs. They include domestic servants, small private workers and petty traders and majority of rural farmers.

6. **The underclass:** This class has little or no connection with the job market. Those who are employed do menial low paying jobs, some are even homeless. They are a group of people for whom poverty persists year after year and across the generations. They mostly causal workers, poor famers. These people are just living from hand to mouth. They are not skilled in any form. They include drunkards and lazy and unorganized people.

### **Social Mobility**

Children inherit the socio-economic status of their parents in the short run but in the long run personal achievement will influence their socio-economic status. According to Macionis (2010) social mobility refers to the movement of individuals and groups between different class positions. In practice, there is no society that even approaches full equality of opportunity and most mobility whether intra or inter-generational, structural mobility, up word mobility made possible by an expansion of better paid occupations at the expenses of poorly paid ones.

Many people in modern societies believe it is possible for anyone to reach the top through hard work and persistence. That is why many Nigerians are patronizing gambling, kidnapping, armed robbery and other fraudulent practices to move upward. Those who own economic capital often manage to pass much of it to their children which succeeding generations inherit perpetuating inequalities. Wealthy parents are able to send their children to better school and economic advantage that benefit the children's social status as adult. Those who already hold positions of wealth and power have many advantages to perpetuate their advantage and to pass them to their offspring. Macionis (2010). The problem is that part of this money being transferred from generation to generation is stolen money from state treasury which helps to perpetuate socio – economic inequality from generation to generation.

Although down ward mobility is less common than upward mobility. Some people are simply unable to sustain the life style into which they were born. The child of a university professor can end up a primary school teacher. But down ward mobility among individuals at times arises through no fault of their own. For instance, during the IMF induced SAP many Nigerians lost their jobs and many could not get equitant ones. They went for lower paying jobs. Globalization has also increased the disparity between the rich and poor. During economic recession many executives lose their jobs. These executives either had difficulty finding new jobs or could only find jobs that paid less than before. Many banks are paying off their workers and many of them get new jobs in micro finance banks which pay lesser salaries their down ward movement of socio – economic status.

### **Dominant Ideology and Poverty**

The dominant ideology holds that people are poor largely because of their own shortcomings. The term dominant ideology describes the set of cultural beliefs and practices that helps to maintain powerful social, economic, and political interests. They control the means of producing beliefs about reality through religion, education and the media (Schaefer 2002). Counter view on the massive persistence of poverty, according to Idriss (1992):

It represents a problem for the popular acceptance of continued economic adjustment; and it represents a problem for growth itself. The problem lies not only in the unintended consequences of the prevailing development paradigm, but in the viability of the paradigm itself. For instance, a substantial part of assets can be created by the poor who have been so marginal to pass development efforts. The poverty of people are not as easily separable from the poverty of nations as was often thought in the past.

This is why despite the number of billionaires and millionaires in Nigeria; the country is still regarded as the world's poverty capital by the western press. The experience of unemployment can be disturbing to those accustomed to having secure jobs; the immediate consequence is loss of income. A hungry man is an angry man. Many youths and others do not see the reason why they should be poor in a rich country with abundant mineral resources. And because of this belief there is no love and justice making them use transferred aggression against the State resulting to armed robbery, kidnapping and other dirty businesses.

### **Review of Relevant Theories of Social Inequality**

Income inequality is a basic characteristic of a class system. A class system is a social ranking based primarily on economic position in which achieved characteristics can influence social mobility.

1. Functionalist perspective: In the view of Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945), society must distribute its members among a variety of social positions. It must not only make sure that these positions are filled but also see that they are staffed by people with appropriate talents and abilities. Rewards, including money and prestige, are based on the importance of a position and the relative scarcity of qualified personnel. Davis and Moore argue that stratification is universal and that social inequality is necessary so that people will be motivated to fill functionally important positions.

2. Conflict perspective: Conflict theorists, including Dahrendorf, contend that the powerful of today, like the bourgeoisie of Marx's time, want society to run smoothly so that they can enjoy their privileged positions.

Because the status quo suits those with wealth, status, and power, they have a clear interest in preventing, minimizing or controlling social conflict. From a conflict perspective, the social significance of the dominant ideology is that a society's most powerful groups and institutions not only control wealth and property, but, even more important, they control the means of producing beliefs about reality through religion, education, and the media (Abercromble et al. 1980, 1990; Robertson (1988).

### **Theoretical frame work**

Even if stratification is inevitable, the functionalist explanation for differential rewards does not explain the wide disparity between the rich and the poor. The conflict perspective is adopted as the theoretical frame work of this study because of their belief in the dominant ideology which describes a set of cultural beliefs and practices that helps to maintain powerful social and political interests. Therefore the language of social and economic inequalities becomes laziness and lack of ambition, (Giddens 2010).

### **Problems of Poverty**

All systems of social inequality create poverty which is either relative poverty or absolute poverty. Relative poverty is the deprivation of some people in relation to those who have more while absolute poverty is more serious a deprivation of resource that is life threatening.

### **Social and Economic Inequalities affect Poor People Negatively nearly in every Dimension of Life:**

1. **Malnutrition:** United Nations Children's Emergency Fund UNICEF (1998), indicated that seven million children die each year as a result of malnutrition. UNICEF further alerts that malnutrition is responsible for the death of 55 percent of 12 million children under the age of five who die each year. Killing and untimely death of children are not the whole disaster brought on the young ones by malnutrition. The scourge is responsible for numerous physical and mental handicaps as well as weakened human systems. Even adults suffer and die of malnutrition only that there are more cases among the young persons. A hungry man is an angry man and since peace is holistic he cannot have peace of mind.

2. **Contradictory Government Policies:** Out of lots of money which have been invested in rural development mostly in the third world countries, very little of it has reached the poor. The poor have been left to their own devices, while the privileged have received a wide range of assistance which have even allowed them to expand their farmland by buying parcels of land belonging to their poor neighbours. There is no love and justice.
3. **Denial of Education:** According to Idriss (1992), the denial of educational advantages means that much human talent remains hidden and repressed. Talent that goes unrecognized and insufficiently cultivated is not going to be utilized. “We have no real way of knowing how much potential talent goes to waste annually because millions of families lack the economic resources to ensure their children an opportunity to cultivate and demonstrate it. As a consequence, the whole is poorer both culturally and materially”. Those who could not train their children do not have peace of mind.
4. **Social Isolation:** Occupying a higher position in a society improves your life chances and brings greater access to social rewards. By contrast, people in the lower social classes are forced to devote a large proportion of their limited resources to the necessities of life. The affluent and powerful not only have more material possessions than others; they also benefit in many nonmaterial ways. They face social exclusion because of their inability to return favour.
5. **Criminal Attack:** Like disease, crime can be particularly devastating when it attacks the poor. People in low-income families were more likely to be assaulted, raped, or robbed than were the most affluent people. Furthermore, if accused of a crime, a person with low income and status is likely to be represented by an overworked public defender. Whether innocent or guilty, the accused may sit in jail for months, unable to raise bail (Perkins and Klaus 1996). There is no love and justice therefore no peace.
6. **The effects of Poverty** can make the socio-economically disadvantaged use transferred aggression against the society denying societal members peaceful co-existence.

### **Solutions to the Problems of Social and Economic Inequalities for Peace Building in Nigeria**

**Rule of law** The principle of rule of law is a system of social contract between the government and the governed on accountability and transparency for the objective aim of achieving common good. According to (Eke, 2017):

respect for the rule of law, civil liberties and fundamental human rights, electoral legitimacy, accountability, transparency, development oriented leadership, efficiency of public institutions decentralization and capacity – building legal and judicial reform and broad civil society participation in decision making

**Gender Equality** Gender equality is important in peace building because once the right thing is done it is making peace. There is an Igbo adage ‘when you treat a child like other children the child will become happy’. Hammonds (1996) observed that both men and women have been partners in laboring together for survival of their society’s right from the earlier of times both should be able to enjoy equality in terms of actualization of opportunities, status (position) and welfare. This is because through awareness campaign by feminists women are now better informed than before. They can no longer accept certain things they accepted in the past therefore this awareness will lead to conflict if not properly handled. This makes peace studies inevitable in every society, (Arist, A and Agbore G 2010).

When women are included in inheritance rights, decision making etc which signify love and justice then the conflict of gender inequality will give way to peace.

Onyishi (2010) outlined the importance of good governance to include the following:

- To enhance their ability to implement development and poverty reduction policies within the existing scarce resources.
- To execute public management functions in an accountable manner
- To create a credible policy environment in which domestic and international investors can have confidence, and trade can be enhanced
- To strengthen absorptive capacity to attract and mobilize development assistance
- To demonstrate transparent and participatory economic policy – making and execution as well as a free flow of information available to all stakeholder
- To signal an adherence to standards of institutional functioning free from corruption.

### **Sources of Conflicts**

Modern education and social changes have altered traditional lifestyle and values.

1. **Modernization:** It is an activity force in the establishment of complex formal and bureaucratic organizations could be seen in terms of what Apter (1965) tagged movement from traditionality to modernity. This obviously includes the evolutionary process like personal to impersonality. This also involves the refinement of traditional infrastructure from mechanical to power-driven technology and the general use and change in taste of the local population.
2. **Non observance of rule of law** The federal government and even the state governments at times do not observe the rule of law. This has tensed up polity. Some people have been granted bail by the courts examples include one time National Chief Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki and the leader of Islamic group loyal to Iran El Zak-Zaky but the federal government denied them the bail order. The same with Omoyele Sowore. The current federal government of Nigeria and labour face-off is another example where N30,000 minimum wage was approved by the national assembly and signed into law by the President of Nigeria Mohamadu Buhari. Vanguard, Monday, September 30, 2019 maintained “that this is a dangerous affront to constitutional order and a contemptuous defiance of the rule of law. The meager amount is still being used for politics. The federal government now feels that the amount is too much without considering amount of money used to maintain political office holders. This is one of the reasons for voter apathy in Nigeria. This has not allowed workers peace of mind, according to Neubeck (1974):  
The powerful, such as leaders of government, also use limited social reforms to buy off the oppressed and reduce the danger of challenges to their dominance. For example, minimum wage laws and unemployment compensation unquestionably give some valuable assistance to needy men and women. Yet these reforms also serve to pacify those who might otherwise rebel. Of course, in the view of conflict theorists, such maneuvers can never entirely eliminate conflict, since workers will continue to demand equality, and the powerful will not give up their control of society. Here because there is no love and justice between government and workers therefore, to achieve peace in the work place is not visible
3. **Urbanization:** It takes place in industrial centres because industries attract labour in cities and labour attracts organization and business. This brought the question of skilled labour, semi-skilled labour and

unskilled labour. This increased social economic disparity among individuals.

The British colonial masters that introduced unitary government in Nigeria did that on selfish ground and did not follow it up. They introduced ethnicity and disunity among Nigerians. Aguleri Memorandum to National Boundary Commission (1999) Noted that:

At that time, the two communities respected the rights of each other and refrained from encroaching on the lands of the other. By then, men and women from the two communities intermarried without reservation. During festivals, boys and girls, men and women from one community extended invitations to their age-grades in the other community. Then, the fraternity between Aguleri and Umuleri was realistic, genuine, and full of merriment and crisi-free, hence, it was the Golden Age of Aguleri and Umuleri. The scenario changed with the coming of the Europeans. As the record put it, when the Europeans came, the modern trade/businesses came with them. The first was the business of giving lands to the Europeans in exchange for some of the new Whiteman's items. First, were the Umuleri people who made the first sales to the Royal Niger Company

The problem of farmers and Herdsmen did not start today. It has always been here with us without any permanent solution, according to Madu and Ayogy (2009).

The Tivs have had a violent conflict which involved fighting and bloodletting between them and Fulani nomads over grazing land. Due to the strong value and the importance of gazing land i.e. pasturing, settlement, etc., the quest for ownership by the displacement of people from their homes and loss of family ties and people were forced into rescue camp in Makurdi

4. **Sexual Harassment:** Most individuals in positions of power such as business executive, medical doctors, supervisors, professors and military officers are men who oversee the work of women. Surveys carried out in widely different work settings show that half of women respondents receive unwanted sexual attention (Paul 1991). Sexual harassment is sometimes blatant and direct. A supervisor for instance, may solicit sexual favours from an employee and threaten reprisal if the advance is refused (Obi 2010).

5. **Neglect:** It can be physical, emotional and educational. Physical neglect includes abandonment, expulsion from the home, delay or failure to seek remedial health care, inadequate supervision, disregard for hazards in the home, or inadequate food, clothing, or shelter. The absence of justice and love give rise to conflict.
6. **Corruption:** poverty in Nigeria is mainly because of bad governance and corruption. Though, the present government is fighting corruption but more need to be done. There should be comprehensive sparring no one irrespective of political affiliation.

### **Solutions to Conflict**

Equitable revenue formulation and allocation according to Owo (2002) is a fundamental basis for national stability and cohesion. Without such manifest equity in revenue formula further distrust will continue, cries of marginalization and neglect may assume more dangerous proportions which in addition to other patent or contrived inequalities may constitute a danger to the integrity of the state.

There is need for the federal government to call a national conference. This national conference will afford the divergent ethnic groups the opportunity to come together and harmonize their seemingly irreconcilable differences. Issues that are obstacles to national integration will be discussed here and possible solutions and compromises will be made for better Nigeria. Here the minority issue in Nigeria should be addressed properly. Here also a better solution to federal character will be addressed since the idea of federal character is not achievement oriented.

The present structure of Nigeria as a presidential state has not favoured Nigeria as a nation. There is agitation here and there. There is insecurity here and there, I think the best is restricting Nigerian State in regional basis. The regions will be reasonably autonomous. This will bring the insecurity in Nigeria to the minimal level. According to Rawlings former President of Ghana:

There are two things that can salvage Nigeria: the first is Nigeria must peacefully retire these old colonial leaders who are still servants to western imperialism, the second is Nigerians must restructure their country back to the days when it was regional system of government. Let every region develop at its own pace, build its resources and people. With this that country called Nigeria will be

the greatest hub for the people of color in the world.

Lack of mobilization of capital is about the greatest inhabitation to women entrepreneurship. Most women spend their money in rearing children and the family up-keep or management that they do not have any personal savings. Their husbands do not encourage them to enter into entrepreneurship because of the challenge involved.

Education is a major factor that can help to free people from the harsh of abject poverty. Qualitative education is a prerequisite for any policy that will reduce poverty because it widens the people's minds about the environment and then they can discover their potentials and utilize them, (Onyishi 2010).

The policy thrust is to ensure a good qualitative education both at the primary and secondary school levels. The policy objectives therefore, can be specified as follows:

- a. Ensure competitive educational training in the primary and secondary school levels.
- b. Ensure equitable distribution of teaching and learning materials among the primary and secondary schools.
- c. Ensuring a strike-free academic programme in the education sector. To ensure the maintenance of skilled and qualified teachers.

There is need for national integration. National integration is a process by which members and groups in a plural society adapt to the demands of national existence. while co-existing (Eliagu 1987). According to Okoye (2009):

Nation-states are product of diversity, there is need for a social pact or covenant to express our commitment as a nation. Covenant is always a product of conflict situation; being a solemn promise made binding by an oath, it must generate the acceptable ways of treating and leading ourselves in the context of socio-political acceptance. A covenant or social pact, a product should then allow the law to enforce their rights and revenge on their behalf; the law or government will have to make itself capable and credible.

Because of lack of integration in Nigeria, there is always fear of domination by the different groups that make up Nigeria as a nation. There are allegations for opportunities for appointment or political offices and resources allocation etc.

The Hausa-Fulani accuses the Yoruba of dominating the economy and the public service. The Igbo blame their woes on Hausa-Fulani

bureaucracy. Minorities accuse the majority tribes of political, religious and cultural oppression. Tribal sentiments permeate national life in Nigeria. Everything in the country has its own tribal tag. Allegations of ethnic discrimination in appointments, jobs and admission into schools, business transactions and the sharing of amenities cut across and can be heard in every part of the federation and there is hardly any official policy that has not been seen to derive from the sole aim of promoting one ethnic interest or the other, (Obasi 2009).

### **Conclusion**

Majority of children from low socio-economic families including their parents, labour in agriculture with the rest in manufacturing, wholesale, and retail trade, restaurants and hotels: working as servants in wealthy households, (ILO 2007), therefore, transferring poverty across generations. Martin (1974), observed that physical injury such as fractures, bruises, burns, internal injuries are also common with the worst psychological trauma of a child being raised in an abusive and violent environment.

Poor governance, disregard to rule of law, corruption including the judiciary and weak social institutions are responsible for Nigeria's undesirable situation. Globalization has widened the gap between the rich and the poor.

### **Recommendation**

We should seek to forge a closer connection between the issues of poverty and sustainable growth. This perspective is not that growth achieved by the privileged will pull the poor out of poverty, but the mobilization and enhancement of the resources and activities of the poor themselves can uphold their dignity and free them from the shackles of misery, while at the same time making a vital contribution to overall sustainable growth.

Poverty is less a failure of the poor, than a failure of policy makers to gasp their potential: According to Idriss (1992), as individuals, many of the poor are virtually unreachable. As member of associations and groups they create their own channels for institutional access. The dynamics of poverty are reversible, but only in collaboration with the poor, themselves. The most valid spokesmen of the poor are the poor themselves.

Education is important for several reasons first, it contribute to economic growth, since people with advanced schooling provide the skilled work necessary for high-wage in industry. Second, Education offer the only hope of escaping from the cycle of harsh working conditions and poverty, since poorly educated people are condemned to low wage, and unskilled jobs. Finally,

educated people are less likely to have large numbers of children, thus slowing the population explosion that contributes to poverty.

Development experts have however, stressed that for a nation to be economically self-reliant, it must necessarily diversify its economy as well as encourage the youth to embrace self-employment through appropriate favourable policies and an environment that facilitates skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

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