**Submission of Assignment in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Sociology of the Atlantic International University.**

**TOPIC: A LOCALIZATION THEORY OF POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT.**

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**Introduction**

Poverty and inequality had been subjects of academic and intellectual discourse and concern for over two centuries. Similarly, both are concepts and conditions that had become defining framework for interventions in development practices. Beyond these, they also encapsulate the directive principles of state policy as enshrined in ground norm of many societies.

As academic and intellectual processes, the scope of poverty and inequality transcends the delineating bounds of academic disciplines to encompass the inherent broadness of their existential contradictions. From sociology to economics, geography to political economy, migration to urban studies, public policy to development studies, all are concerned with improving the human conditions using specific and peculiar methodologies. In other words, both concepts are better studied and understood from multi disciplinarian perspectives.

However, poverty and inequality are essentially social conditions created by man and as a result depend on man consciousness for its re-creation. Hence, due to their human roots, they are social facts ‘sui generis’. That is, man’s creation that is above man (Durkheim, 1964). Thus, being social facts and social conditions makes both poverty and inequality more of sociological concern.

Talking about poverty is talking about inequality. Poverty engenders inequality and inequality reinforces poverty

Overtime, sociologists have attempted to theorize poverty for more clarity and cognitive understanding. Appropriating theoretical frameworks like poverty subculture (Lewis, 1969) and theory of relative deprivation, (Gurr, 1970; Merton, 1968) they constructed a mechanistic and largely superficial poverty architecture that did not take into account the geography and localization of poverty within national boundary. The thrust of the arguments of these theories are that rural people are more deprived of materials and existential necessities required for human happiness than their urban counterparts and that most rural dwellers possess poverty mentality and thus constitute a poverty subculture. By this token, it is on this epistemic basis that government policies and interventions from international organizations are designed. However, this paper proposes a theory of geography of poverty that situates the poorest people in the urban areas as against conventional beliefs. Relying on major sociological dichotomy of society dating back to the works of classical sociologists like Comte, Spencer and Weber to those of contemporary thinkers, the thesis hypothesizes that that rural people are happier, less susceptible to diseases, lives in more peaceful and humane communities and generally have higher quality of life than most urban dwellers contrary to extant academic theories and legends.

Essentially, poverty and inequality are two sides of an inhumanity coin, and they speak to man’s extreme individualism in his interaction with fellow man. Both have human roots as artificial creations that reinforce and replicate each other. Both are permanent features of all human societies, either developed or undeveloped, transiting or transitional and existing in global north or global south. This is because a poor man remains a poor man anywhere in the world.

Though, poverty and inequality exist everywhere, it is more pronounced in the global south, made up of developing countries of Africa like Nigeria, Asia countries like Nepal and South American nations like Bolivia. It should be noted that poverty and inequality are the only known yardsticks that confer the status of either development or underdevelopment on countries.

Taking Nigeria poverty situation as a case in point, it is assuming a worsening and worrisome dimension. The world poverty clock, in its latest release, revealed that Nigeria is the new poverty capital of the world with nearly half of its population (about 100 million people) trapped under the poverty net; yet, the same Nigeria is home to the richest and the third richest men in Africa. The combined wealth of the five richest persons in Nigeria is more than the total 2018 budget of the Nigeria Federal government. (Oxfam, 2019). This is a country that is the 6th largest producer of crude oil in the world. Beyond these, the greatest threat to the realization of SDGs by 2030 is coming from Nigeria as it had been predicted that by 2030, a quarter of the poorest people in the world will be found there!

**Problematization**

The problem of this paper is to identify and determine through the instrumentality of empirical efforts, the actual location of the real poor in Nigeria between rural and urban locations. This is to challenge or reinforce legendary assumptions and misconceptions on poverty. In addition, this paper would also be concerned with the determination of the poorer between those living in rural and urban areas.

**State of Knowledge**

Most studies on poverty and inequality are centered on their causation and effects with very few being concerned with the geography of poverty. Even the few that had dwelled on the geography, location and spatial dimension of poverty have concentrated more on national poverty differentials between countries which parallel Immanuel (Wallenstein, 1974) submission in his World System Theory, while largely neglecting the intra national spatial differences between rural and urban areas, or at best relying on conventional wisdom to explain the prevalence of poverty at rural locations than urban areas (Massey, 1996). (Okwi et al, 2007) in a study titled ‘Spatial Determinants of Poverty in Rural Kenya’, concluded from the onset that poverty is higher in rural Kenya than its Urban areas and they set about measuring poverty rates among rural locations in Kenya without any consideration of comparison with urban locations. A related research on ‘Tracking Poverty in Nigeria” (Zuhumran, 2018) submits that ‘’chronic poverty is less prevalent in Nigerian oil producing regions and more pronounced in the country’s north east’’. This is an euphemism that oil producing south of Nigeria which is more urbane have lower poverty levels than the agrarian north that is largely rural. Also, (the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC), 2010) reports that “it is intuitive that poverty levels are likely to be artificially higher for those living in remote or isolated locations”. Six years earlier, the same organizations released a report that two third (2/3) of the estimated 1.8 billion living in the rural areas of developing countries are in less favoured or low potential areas (CRPC, 2004). However, in what can be regarded as an authoritative affirmation by The World Bank, one of the foremost multinational organizations preoccupied with research on poverty through two of its bloggers (Nguyen and Dixon, 2015) in a blog quipped that ‘tell me where you are and I can predict how well you will do in life’. Falling into the same intellectual trap of employing country-wide poverty analysis, they revealed that a child born in Togo today is expected to live nearly twenty years less than a child born in the United States. (Harrington, 1991) canvasses the view that a small group of poor people exist in the United States and they live at the fringe of the society. Using the famed conventional wisdom approach, (Massey, 1996) held that many blacks in the United States use affirmative action programmes to improve their status and immediately this happens, they distance themselves both physically and symbolically from other blacks.

It should be noted that all these ideas canvassed by different authors suffers from poverty of empiricism. That is, they relied on intuition and conventional wisdom and assumptions to reach their various conclusions that poverty levels is higher in the rural areas of a particular country than its urban areas. In addition, most of these geographical studies on poverty are concerned with broad national variations in poverty levels and neglect within country spatial variations. It is this lacuna that this paper is drawing attention to.

**Localization Theory of Poverty**

My localization theory of poverty, otherwise known as theory of geography of poverty attempts to explain poverty in terms of its prevalence in urban locations than rural areas. The starting points of analysis are the existential needs of man which are food, clothing and shelter. In rural communities in Nigeria and Africa, nobody goes hungry because of the established extended family system. Likewise, no one is allowed to be homeless. The clothing need in rural Africa is also very simple. The commonest occupation in rural areas, which is farming is guaranteed to feed all. This is in contrast to urban areas where a lot of people go hungry because of lack of job arising from population explosion. There are also many homeless people in the urban areas unable to afford decent housing and living in squalor. This is a rarity in the rural areas.

In terms of quality of life, rural communities are also better off. Because of their simple lifestyles, there is lower population due to rural-urban migration, rural folks breathe in uncontaminated air and are majorly immune from exposure and inhalation of carbon monoxide common to urban areas due to heavy and constant vehicular movements which tend to the needs of its growing population. In remote rural areas, vehicular transport is not common. In rural communities, crime is reduced as opposed to urban areas as people know themselves through communal life. This is against the high crime rate associated with urban life which exposes its residents to violent crimes thereby reducing both quality of life and life expectancy.

In terms of food intakes, rural people consume food rich in protein and nutrients while urban people are exposed to disease causing foods with high sugary contents. These have implications for their lifestyles and quality of life.

Going by the report of world poverty clock that there are about 100 million poor people in Nigeria; is it not a contradiction to assert that most of these poor people are to be found in the rural areas when we know that the rural areas are sparsely populated due to unbridled rural – urban drift.

Noise pollution, which has remained a permanent contradiction in urban life, is greatly reduced or nonexistent in rural areas. This improves their quality of life and enhances longetivity.

An examination of comparative data in two locations in Nigeria lends credence to this theory. Crime data for Ikeja Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State, representing an urban area was compared with that of Iwajowa Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State representing a rural location. For Ikeja LGA, a total of 132 crimes were reported between January and October 2021 while only 15 was reported in Iwajowa LGA. Of the 132 crimes that occurred in Ikeja of Lagos State, 98 of them were crime against property like break in, stealing, pick pocketing and armed robbery, and 40 were crimes against persons like murder, battery, grievous body injury etc. None of the crimes reported in Iwajowa of Oyo State were committed against person and only 3 were against properties. It can be argued therefore that the prevalence of crimes against persons and properties in the urban location is a clear testimony of its tense living condition and low quality of life.

Hospital records were also examined for the two locations. Records from Ikeja general hospital between September 2021 and December 2021 revealed that 55 people died in the hospital while records from Iwere-ile general hospital recorded 3 deaths within the same period. It is also instructive to know that terminal illness like AIDS, renal failure and cancer featured prominently among cases handled in Ikeja while this is not the case in Iwajowa. Most of their cases were malaria and pregnancy related. Through observation, Iwajowa LGA is seen to be more peaceful and serene with less emission of dangerous gases than Ikeja LGA where the horns of automobiles and different types of environmental pollution arising from various human activities are rife.

**Theoretical Consideration: Theory of Urban Mentality by George Simmel**

George Simmel, a German Sociologist provided a classical explanation of the contradictions of urban life in what has become known as the theory of urban mentality. In an essay titled “The Metropolis and Mental Life”, Simmel identified a special type of mentality that exist and is peculiar to urban and metropolitan areas as distinct from township ruralities. The urban area is typified by a money economy which has a profound effect and defining influence on human relationship, with social interaction increasingly becoming dominated by a ‘blasé and reserved attitude’. To Simmel, there is a certain ‘we-feeling’ and emotionality in the small towns while the city is characterized by ‘shallow intellectuality’ that matches the calculability needed to oil the money economy. George Simmel believes that an average city dweller is a loner that becomes constrained to the ‘objective culture’ of the city unlike the local community folks that enjoys the communality of the local life. He called the city a ‘frightful leveler’ that practically reduces all that dwells in it to unfeeling calculability.

Simmel’s theory of urban mentality captures succinctly the thrust of this paper. The thesis implies that rural locations are better than urban and metropolitan locations, and that lives are more meaningful in rural settings. His argument could be stretched to provide interpretation that poverty and inequality is higher and rife in urban settings because of the inhibiting objective culture and the total worship of money which lead to intense competition among urban dwellers to possess it. This general need for money to solve even the basic human necessities like hunger and clothing result in unhealthy competition and struggles leading to conflict and violence.

**Criticism.**

The theory of urban mentality can be criticized on the ground that it failed to take into consideration rapid modernization and the evolution of a post modern world which had blurred the sharp dividing lines between cities and towns. Also, cashless transaction which has replaced the use of physical cash had also exposed the fault lines of the theory which emphasizes more on the money economy.

However, despite these shortcomings, the theory is very relevant in explaining the localization theory of poverty.

**Conclusion.**

The thrust of this paper is to prove against conventional beliefs and general knowledge and assumptions that poverty is more localized in the rural areas than in urban locations. The rural-urban migration or drift that is common in many developing and some developed countries lend credence to this as rural folks leave the rural areas in droves to the city in search of an elusive better life. Through observation and comparison of health and crime data, it was successfully proved that life is actually better and more meaningful in the rural areas than in cities where city dwellers are turned into lonely crowds by the restraining objective culture permeating urban life. The emergence of the rampaging scourge, Covid-19 has also shown that the prevalence of infection of the disease is concentrated and extremely higher than what obtains in the rural areas. Some far flung rural communities visited in the course of preparing this paper like Tede, Iwere-ile, Okaka, Ipapo and Agunrege in Oke-ogun area of Oyo State reveal the absence of the virus. In fact, people were going about their normal business and were somewhat oblivion of Covid- 19 pandemic.

However, despite the recognition of poverty prevalence in urban areas, it is still recommended that the rural areas should be the target of more developmental initiatives in other to decongest the cities and draw people back to the communities. It is only through this, that inclusive and sustainable development can be guaranteed.

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