POVERTY AND DISASTER VULNERABILITIES AMONG RESIDENTS OF HAZARDS-PRONE AREAS IN GUSAU ETROPOLIS: A PERCEPTION STUDY

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Abstract - The paper is designed to study the perception of poverty and disaster vulnerabilities among residents of hazards-prone areas in Gusau Metropolis, Northwestern Nigeria. The study area was stratified based on its three main physical layouts; consisting of: The old town; the Government Reserve Area (GRA); and the Suburbs/fringe areas. Thereafter, a reconnaissance survey was conducted to identify the hazard-prone areas, from which 100 respondents were randomly selected and adesigned 3 – point Likert scale questionnaires – "Agree", "Disagree", and "Undecided" were administered to them. The results from the Test Statistic reveal that 93% of the residents are low-income earners and most of them do not have stable sources of income. Similarly, the study observes that in most parts of the study area, a greater percentage of the residents suffer inadequate access to basic services (potable water, electricity, sanitation facilities, medical services, etc.). On the ecological challenges in the areas, the respondents lamented that problem such as flooding result in the loss of household utilities and displacement of business areas which consequently predisposes the victims to income/job losses which also adds sour to their poverty. In line with the findings, the paper recommends that an empirical investigation into the environmental situation of those areas and the livelihoods of the residents be carried out to ascertain the authenticity of the respondents' opinions, which will finally guide the choice of appropriate policies to be designed in improving their living standards.In addition,Gusau Municipal Authorities should regulate the emergence of uncontrolled, scattered low-density urban development, and where already in existence, such sprawl areas should be fully integrated in the development plans.

Key words - Urban Poverty, Disaster Vulnerability, Slum dwellers, Environmental degradation, and Sustainable education

I. INTRODUCTION

The protection and sustainable management of Ecosystem services that support human development is central to achieving sustainability of the only home of man – the Earth's environment. As one of the 27 principles enunciated at the Earth summit United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNED) held in Rio de Janeiro (1992), "Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature". This cardinal principle, while bringing into focus the pivotal role of man in the sustainable development efforts, it at the same time stresses the need for humans to sustain the ecological balance in nature.

In view of the above assertions and in consideration of the complex nature of the environment; a holistic approach must therefore be embraced for efficient environmental protection through effective poverty reduction strategies. Studies have shown that poverty of opportunities, bad living conditions, and insecurity are often related to environmental degradation, and that the poor - both urban and rural - are often the biggest victims of environmental degradation.

Against these backgrounds, the objective of this study is therefore to provide a baseline data on the perception of poverty and disaster vulnerabilities among the residents of hazard-prone areas in Gusau Metropolis, Northwestern Nigeria with a view to addressing the problems for sustainable education and national development.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The rapid growths of urban poor, many of whom have occupied the slums that are developed in areas unsuitable for residential use – with little or no provision of basic facilities and services have put a large portion of the residents of 'Dan Bedi', 'Bakin Gulbi', 'Yamutsawa', 'Hayin Dan Hausa', and 'Bulka' areas of Gusau Metropolis at great risk. Some of them occupy areas adjacent to River Sokoto and its flood plains; and erect structures on water ways which are liable to flooding. The September 2006 and 2013 flood disasters in Gusaufor instancehave left indelible effects on most residents of these areasleading to the destruction of homes, shops and business areas which further predisposes them to homelessness, properties and income/job loss thereby adding sour to their poverty, with its consequent effects on their children's enrolment/achievement in schools.

Similarly, most of those households are characterized by poor living conditions and waste disposal systems – with some households directly discharging their latrines into watercourses – which also complicate the situation, resulting in the establishment of breeding grounds for many disease vectors, as well as causing the prevalence of many health hazards from air, water and land pollutions. Consequently, epidemics results which further aggravate their poverty levels and impacts negatively on the access, achievement, and attainment of their children in schools, as resources

constraints will force them to opt for medical attention in favour of children's education.

In the light of the above therefore, this study is poised to answer the following research questions:

I. What are the perceptions of the residents on the hazard risk involved in their habitation of such areas?
II. What environmental disaster(s) commonly prevail in those areas?

III. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to assess the perspectives of vulnerable urban poor living in the hazard prone areas of Gusau Metropolis. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the socio-economic characteristics of the residents of such areas
2. Unveil the perspectives of the slum dwellers on poverty and disaster vulnerabilities and relate how suchvulnerabilities pose threats to sustainable development, particularly on environment and children's education in the area.

IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population of this study comprises of all the poor household heads residing within the hazard-prone areas of Gusau Metropolis. However, after a careful reconnaissance survey, purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting five areas that appear to have high concentrations of urban poor, and those that are most likely to be vulnerable to ecological challenges. These areas include: 'Dan Bedi', YarDantsi, 'BakinGulbi', 'Yamutsawa', 'Hayin Dan Hausa', and 'Bulka' areas.

A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to the respondents in those areas. However, in the administration of the research tool, the sample size drawn from each sampling unit has reflected the size of that unit.

Questionnaires administered to the urban poor who are residents of hazard-prone areas within the study area have yielded the much needed data for this study. The instrument was divided into two sections: section A deals with the socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents, while section B was a 3-point Likert scale with 14 items, each asking a specific question on parameters of urban poverty and disaster vulnerability.

The instruments used in the collection of data for this study were validated by some experienced personalities in the field of educational research from the school of education, Zamfara State College of Education, Maru, before it was administered in the field. In the same vein, the reliability of the research instrument was also determined by those personalities mentioned above, who ascertained that the instrument stands a viable tool for data collection, and will most likely produce the desired result in this study.

In order to answer the research questions, the data generated from the responses were analyzed using the weighted mean technique. The cut-off point of 2.00 was determined because a 3-point scale was used representing the values 3 to 1. Thus, any item(s) with a mean of 2.00 and above was considered a significant factor. In the same vein, the mean ranks for each of the items listed in the questionnaires were computed to determine the views of the respondents on the most significant factor of urban poverty and disaster vulnerability in Gusau Metropolis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age (years)	Sex of the respondents					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Less than 21	1	1	0	0	1	1
21 – 40	11	11	0	0	11	11
41 – 60	48	48	4	4	52	52
61 and above	29	29	7	7	36	36
Total	89	89	11	11	100	100

TABLE 1: Age and sex distribution of the respondents

Source: Field work, 2016

Educational status	Occupation of the respondents									
	Farming	%	Local Craft	%	Trading	%	Civil Service	%	Total	%
Qur'anic educ.	28	28	16	16	9	9	0	0	53	53
Adult educ.	11	11	7	7	6	6	0	0	24	24
Primary educ.	6	6	4	4	7	7	0	0	17	17
Secondary educ.	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	5	5
Tertiary educ.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Total	47	47	28	28	22	22	3	3	100	100

TABLE 2: Educational status and occupation of the respondents

Source: Field work, 2016

Table 3 below shows the responses listed in the questionnaires. Moreover, in order to answer the research questions posed earlier, a computation of the mean responses was made to provide the basis for accepting or rejecting a factor as significant or otherwise.

SN	ITEMS	A	D	U	Mean score	Decision	Overall Rank
1	Most of the residents in this area are low-income earners.	93	6	1	2.92	Accept	1st
2	Some of them do not have stable sources of income	44	19	37	2.07	Accept	12th
3	Most of the residents are also characterized by large family size with high number of dependents	15	75	10	2.05	Accept	13th
4	Most households in this area use Child labour/street hawking as a common poverty coping strategy	33	59	8	2.01	Accept	14th
5	Greater percentage of the residents in this area has no adequate access to basic services (potable water, electricity, sanitation facilities, medical services, etc.)	77	15	8	2.69	Accept	5th
6	children from these households therefore spent more hours fetching water, which makes them late or even absent in schools	81	18	1	2.80	Accept	4th
7	Some of the inhabitants of this area live in filthy environments which often times emit bad odours	83	15	2	2.81	Accept	3rd
8	The living condition of most households in this area predisposes them to disaster vulnerabilities like flooding and epidemics	91	7	2	2.89	Accept	2nd
9	Destruction of household utilities, shops and business areas are common ecological challenges facing majority of us – the slum dwellers	25	56	19	2.06	Accept	11th
10	Theses slums we occupy destroy the aesthetic quality of the urban environment	69	24	7	2.62	Accept	6th
11	Urban poor living in these slums face problems of tenure insecurity	47	41	12	2.35	Accept	8th
12	Most of the children living in these areas do not have access to Basic Education due to the poverty level of their parents	54	26	20	2.34	Accept	9th
13	Where there is access to education, there is exist high rate of school drop out	61	15	24	2.37	Accept	7th
14	The prevailing ecological challenges predispose our children to disease vulnerabilities, which also affects their performance in schools	30	53	17	2.13	Accept	10th

Table 3: Respondents' views on issues of urban poverty and disaster vulnerabilities

Source: Dalhatu, 2016

NOTE: A: agree, D: disagree, U: undecided (Scores: A= 3, D= 2, U= 1)

MAJOR FINDINGS

a. Some of these urban poor as observed by this study occupy hazard prone areas which pose serious vulnerability threats to the inhabitants, while some live in filthy environments which often times emit bad odours. These consequently destroy the aesthetic quality of the urban environment and pose serious health hazard to the life of the slum dwellers.
b. In most parts of the study area, greater percentage of the residents of hazard prone areas suffer inadequate access to basic services (potable water, electricity, sanitation facilities, medical services, etc.) so children spend more hours fetching water even during school hours

c. Most of the residents are low-income earners and some of them do not have stable sources of income.
d. They are also characterized by large family size with high number of dependents.
e. Residential tenure insecurity is another major characteristics of this vulnerable group.
f. Most poor households in this area use Child labour as a common poverty coping strategy .
g. Ecological challenges such as flooding make majority of the residents face problems of loss of household utilities and other valuables.
h. Displacement of shops and business areas predisposes the victims to income/job loss which also adds sour to their poverty, and consequently affects their children's enrollment/achievement in school.
i. Occupation of such hazard prone areas also makes them more susceptible to diseases such as Malaria, Rashes/Itching, Diarrhea, Skin ulcers, Typhoid fever, Respiratory problems, Bilharzias, Other health problems.

IMPLICATIONS OF POVERTY AND DISASTER VULNERABILITY ON SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

Ergan (2007) argues that the association of child poverty with low educational achievement is well known and that disadvantaged children are not enjoying the rate of progress experienced by their more privileged peers.

The rapid growth in the population of urban poor reflects itself in schools with too many children living in classrooms characterizedby inadequate ventilation, which could lead to the spread of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), Cerebro-spinal Meningitis (CSM), etc.

Moreover, poor sanitary conditions, in addition to unsafe drinking water in urban slums and school environments predisposes the inhabitants, including school children to the risk of typhoid fever, cholera, skin rashes/itching, etc., which consequently results in sickness with its associated loss of concentration to lessons and even absenteeism from schools.

In the same vein, as poverty affects the educational opportunities of children from poor households, it becomes clear that the human capital of that important segment of the population – the children – remains inefficiently developed. This to a large extent makes poverty to perpetuate in their households with no strong force to break its various cycles. And consequent upon that will be very little contributions on their part to nation building.

As observed in the study, most parts of the study area suffer inadequate provision of amenities like water supply, which compels households to send out their children to fetch water from other sources – wells or river. This makes the children late or even absent in schools as they have to satisfy the water demand of their poor households. Consequently, this may deny them the acquisition of basic skills/learning outcomes they may require to become socially and economically active citizens.

Similarly, child labour/street hawking, which the study identifies as one of the poverty coping strategies adopted by some urban poor in supplementing the households' finances has its own negative impacts on children's education. The children of school going age are sent out to hawk various wares during school hours which affect their class attendance and often times leads to examination failures and subsequently drop out.Poverty and direct cost of schooling contribute significantly to the rising trend of low level of children's access, attainment, and achievements in schools. To buttress this fact, Dalhatu and Basheer (2011) identified poverty as the key determinant of child labour which makes some households within Gusau metropolis to see it as indispensable to their livelihoods. According to the authors, Child labour in addition to the parental perceptions of children as economic assets result in the high opportunity cost of sending children to school especially girls.Dalhatu (2010) also asserts that the current prohibitive cost of schooling evident in the nation's educational system is responsible for not educating or for removing children, particularly girls, from school.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Poverty and disaster vulnerabilities are often interlinked challenges facing many urban slum dwellers in Gusau area. This paper is therefore of the view that poverty reduction strategies for this category of the urban population could only achieve the desired results if they include protection and maintenance of a healthy urban ecosystem installed with infrastructural facilities aimed at improving the livelihood of the urban poor. Furthermore, Gusau Municipal Authorities should regulate the emergence of uncontrolled, scattered, low-density urban development, and were already in existence, such sprawl areas be fully integrated into the development plans. International government organizations, such as the UN, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private development banks should assist in alleviating the plight of that proportion of the urban population.

Finally, holistic educational policies that support disadvantaged and out-of-school children should be formulated and implemented, so as to provide those children equal access to the attainment of basic education as their more privileged counterparts.

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