A Comparative Assessment of Vision 20:2020 Poverty Alleviation Programmes under President Umaru Musa Yar'adua/Goodluck Jonathan Administration and Buhari Administration

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Abstract

This study presents a comparative assessment of the poverty alleviation programmes implemented under Nigeria's Vision 20:2020 framework during the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua/Goodluck Jonathan administration (2007–2015) and the Muhammadu Buhari administration (2015–2020). The research investigates the effectiveness, challenges, and outcomes of these initiatives in addressing persistent poverty in Nigeria. The study is anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT), which emphasizes the role of visionary and reform-minded leadership in driving societal transformation. The theory underscores the significance of leadership qualities such as charisma, motivation, and innovation in overcoming implementation challenges and rallying stakeholders toward shared development goals. Using a qualitative comparative research design, the paper relies on both secondary data from government reports, academic literature, and policy documents and primary data collected through interviews with political leaders, analysts, and scholars. Content analysis and thematic analysis were employed to examine policy evolution, institutional approaches, and governance structures across the administrations. Key discussions center on flagship programmes such as NAPEP, YouWIN, SURE-P, and the Social Investment Programme (SIP), including N-Power, GEEP, and Conditional Cash Transfers. While each administration expanded poverty interventions in scope and funding, structural weaknesses such as corruption, poor coordination, policy discontinuity, and weak institutional capacity limited sustainable outcomes. Findings reveal modest poverty reduction trends, with poverty headcount ratios decreasing from ~54.7% under Yar'Adua to 52.1% under Jonathan and 45.3% under Buhari. Despite this, multidimensional poverty remained high, with programmes frequently hindered by poor targeting, governance deficits, and external shocks such as economic recessions and insecurity. The study concludes that transformational leadership, institutional reform, and policy continuity are essential for effective poverty alleviation. It recommends strengthening data systems, improving transparency and monitoring, and aligning political agendas with inclusive, citizen-centered development frameworks.

Keywords: Poverty Alleviation, Transformational Leadership, Vision 20:2020, Social Investment Programmes, Governance in Nigeria

Introduction

In 2009, Nigeria launched what was to become a bold and strategic long-term development plan known as Vision 20:2020, which aimed to transform the country into one of the top 20 economies in the world by 2020. The vision at its core was about harnessing Nigeria's abundant human and natural resources to achieve rapid economic growth, sustainable economic development, and a significantly improved standard of living for its citizens. An essential part of this vision was addressing poverty by reducing income inequality, providing more people with access to education and healthcare, increasing employment opportunities, and empowering the marginalized through targeted social programs.

Although Nigeria is firmly committed to ending poverty, it has not reduced the rise among millions of its people. Recent reports indicate that Nigeria's poverty rating has gone from 38% in 2010 (World Bank, 2018) to 40.1% in 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Besides these, corruption, weak institutions, changes in government policies, and shaky economic situations make it harder to reduce poverty. As a result, anti-poverty programs have not performed well, and achieving Vision 20:2020's objectives has become harder. The purpose of this article is to study how poverty alleviation programmes have effectively contributed to poverty reduction in Nigeria, identify the challenges, and how the Nigerian government can re-strategise to effectively reduce the alarming rate of poverty rise in the country. The research analyzes both administrations' actions to compare their styles, budgets, outcomes, and what worked or did not work.

A comparative analysis method was adopted in the article with the assistance of government documents, data collected by agencies, and academic studies. The paper looks at major anti-poverty initiatives implemented or expanded by each administration, measures their results using available information, and identifies what influenced their successes or failures. As a result, the study offers advice backed by research that could guide new efforts to reduce poverty in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Background of Vision 20:2020

Nigeria's Vision 20:2020, set in 2009, is a long-term strategy to elevate the status of the country to one of the world's top 20 economies by 2020. Improving the lives of all Nigerians by alleviating poverty and supporting equal and inclusive development was a significant aim of the vision. The vision was designed to harness the skills of the Nigerian people and land by encouraging continuous economic growth, moving away from oil dependency, and making specific investments in society (Vision 20:2020, 2009).

Vision 20:2020 is designed with three key pillars as its core goals. At the outset, ensuring people are productive and healthy encouraged improving education, providing better healthcare, improving social protection, and tackling poverty. The authors understood that Nigeria's large population was its most significant advantage and that investments in skills and welfare could best use this potential (Vision 20:2020, 2009). Second, improving essential parts of the economy was designed to speed up industrialization and build a more varied economy by boosting agriculture, manufacturing, and services, and making the country less dependent on changes in oil prices. In addition, the government promoted sustainable progress in society and the economy by working on governance, infrastructure, and environmental concerns and establishing trustworthy bodies to carry out the vision's plans.

Vision 20:2020 was created based on Nigeria's past work in national development plans and programs to reduce poverty, starting after independence. The early First National Development Plan (1962–1968) mainly aimed at building infrastructure and boosting the economy, but failed to reduce poverty because of political trouble and the wrong use of resources. After that, programs like the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) were implemented in the 2000s, but problems in governance and weak institutions limited their efforts.

In this case, Vision 20:2020 was created to include more ideas and involve a wider group, using what was learned in previous experiences. It encouraged a method that included people from every part of government, the private sector, and civil society so that all policies were relevant and owned. The vision was intended to come to life in three development plans from 2010 to 2020, setting definite goals to reduce poverty in line with international commitments, including the MDGs and the SDGs (Ministry of Budget and National Planning, 2009). Nigeria struggled to reduce poverty during the Vision 20:2020 period because of ongoing problems with structure and governance. It is necessary to understand what the vision hoped to achieve and the situation it faced to judge the success of poverty alleviation programs and decide on new strategies.

The study of governance within the context of achieving Vision 20:2020 provides a better understanding of political will and leadership roles in improving the lives of Nigerians. Nwogbo and Ighodalo (2021) in their study found that bad leadership and corruption have disrupted development. This is because corruption leads to weak institutions, a lack of accountability, and ultimately affects democracy. Leadership theory was adopted in their study, and they concluded that Nigeria lacks transformational leadership that will combat corruption and alleviate poverty in the country. Furthermore, another study by Ayankoya and Osimen (2023), titled 'The Impact of

Leadership Selection Process on National Development in Nigeria,' hypothesized that structural corruption, weak constitution implementation, and electoral fraud threaten the leadership selection process in Nigeria. In their findings, they argued that these factors, including tribalism and religion, are used as tools to manipulate voters, affecting the quality of leaders elected and appointed. Hence, this affects the pace and quality of development pursued in the country. Furthermore, the writers argue that the lack of a standardised leadership selection process has led to a cycle of poor governance and it translates to economic instability and corruption.

Theoretical Framework

For this paper, transformational leadership theory (TLT) has been adopted, because it best contextualises the study of the role of leadership in improving their societies. In his paper, Ughulu (2024), examines the role of leadership in socioeconomic development and organisational structure, as he argues good leadership will have positive influence in the country. James MacGregor Burns developed this theory in 1978 and further refined by Bernard Bass (1985) to discuss and analyse the role of leaders in transforming their societies, because they can bring inspiration and motivate individuals and organisations. TLT is mostly defined as a set of interrelated characteristics that enable leaders to attain significant change in their scope of work. Furthermore, it proposes that a transformative leader is one who pays attention to their followers, understands their needs, and actualises them. This theory is applicable in organisations, crisis management, politics, and any institution with a hierarchy. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), the four key components that characterise transformational leadership are; charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

This theory is relevant to the paper because it addresses political will, which is an important aspect in the progression of a society. Firstly, transformational leadership is needed for vision setting, and that was embedded also in the Vision itself. Fikarno (2021) argues that countries need to move from having a transactional leader to a transformational one, because he will respond better to contemporary issues. After the creation of Nigeria's Vision 20:2020, the National Planning Committee (2010) stated that to achieve the national development plan, Nigeria needs a visionary leader who will implement the necessary reforms needed to achieve the vision. Secondly, a transformation leader will attain and enhance mobilisation and commitment (Burns 1978). This is because to implement the vision, stakeholders, including the citizens, civil society, the private sector, and government agencies. A synergy across the stakeholders will enhance collective political will and bring them a step closer to achieving their goals. Thirdly, transformational leadership aids in overcoming implementation barriers (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). National development plans, particularly those addressing complex issues such as poverty, often face numerous implementation challenges. Hence, a visionary leader with intellectual capacity will be innovative in overcoming the challenges. Lastly, transformational leaders are agents of systemic change.

However, with the influence of this theory, it also faces critiques. According to some scholars, the theory is prescriptive and can be authoritarian; it can be hard to measure and overemphasises the role of a leader (Yukl, 2010). Additionally, the emphasis on the leader creates the risk of heroism, which can complicate the existing political and institutional reality of a developing country.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative comparative research design. Secondary data were sourced from government publications and documents, organisational reports, journal articles, and so on. While primary data were sourced from political leaders, political analysts, and academics through qualitative interviews within the course of the paper. Primary data were used to support the arguments in the paper with the use of facts and figures from experts in the field. Content analysis and thematic analysis methods were used to analyse the secondary and primary data, respectively.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes under President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, President Goodluck Jonathan, and President Muhammadu Buhari

1. Yar'Adua Administration (2007–2010): Foundation and Early Progress

From 2007 to 2010, during President Yar'Adua's tenure, Nigeria's fight against poverty became a key part of the country's national development. He launched Nigeria's official Vision 20:2020, a plan to make Nigeria one of the top twenty economies in the world by 2020. The main policy framework for helping people experiencing poverty was set within a broad development strategy. However, the targets listed above were not accomplished in the Yar'Adua Administration because it dealt with numerous challenges, mainly political instability caused by the fact that he was sick for much of his presidency and did not remain in office for long (Abanikannda & Adekomi, 2021). At the core of President Yar'Adua's plan to help people experiencing poverty was continuing and strengthening the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) that was formed early in the 2000s but never thoroughly carried out. The objective of NAPEP was to help the country's marginalized people through local programs, loans, and business support. Youths and women in remote and underdeveloped areas were the primary targets because they were more likely to face poverty. NAPEP, according to Ishidi and Babanyaya (2020), was set up to encourage sustainable crop and animal production through cooperative groups, entrepreneurship, and easier access to banking. The goal was to encourage more people to be involved in the economy, raise incomes, and reduce poverty at the source.

Besides the NAPEP plan, the Yar'Adua administration ensured that human capital growth was a main support for poverty eradication. Because education and healthcare improve both productivity and the economy over the long term, so they were prioritized. The Administration realized that poverty is multidimensional and that health outcomes and educational attainment must be improved to lift communities out of poverty (Eneh, 2011). In addition, the government stressed the need for agricultural development because a significant proportion of Nigeria's poor people live in rural agrarian areas. Efforts were made to increase agricultural productivity, build rural infrastructure, and facilitate smallholder farmers' market access. These efforts were made to stimulate rural economies and address food security challenges tied to poverty reduction, as Shaibu (2024) points out.

Yar'Adua's Administration had a vision of clarity and policy intentions, yet many constraints prevented practical poverty alleviation efforts. The problem of inadequate budgetary allocation was one of the most pressing challenges. The country's expenditure on poverty-focused programs was disproportionately low at less than 0.5% of the budget. It was grossly inadequate to scale programs across the country or provide a significant impact (Ejemezu & Ajala, 2023). Part of the reason was that competing priorities and fiscal limitations within the government's broader financial management framework resulted in this underfunding. More critically, the Administration was riven with political uncertainty, as President Yar'Adua had been ill for so long. His incapacitation created a power vacuum and governance instability, which stalled policy continuity, delayed critical program rollout, and impaired administrative efficiency (Obilor & Amadi, 2024). As a result, many poverty alleviation initiatives stayed at the policy or pilot phase, never reaching a level of implementation at scale.

These challenges had a tangible impact on Nigeria's poverty statistics during that era. The national poverty headcount was stubbornly high at around 60 percent and had not shown any signs of declining during Yar'Adua's time (Adeleke et al., 2023). This stagnation can exemplify the failure of poverty alleviation at a large scale; policy frameworks were articulated, and some programmatic activities were initiated, but there were no large-scale poverty alleviation outcomes. During this period, there was more focus on policy formulation and institutional setup rather than robust, ground-level interventions that would immediately and measurably improve the lives of low-income people.

In addition, governance and institutional weaknesses eroded Yar'Adua's efforts to reduce poverty. Often, coordination among the many Government ministries and agencies engaged in poverty alleviation was fragmented, roles were sometimes overlapping, and resources were sometimes not used efficiently. No strong monitoring and evaluation framework was in place to enable the Administration to track progress and correct programs quickly (Chukwuemeka Akuche & Akindoyin, 2024). Bureaucratic inefficiencies and delays in fund disbursement also hampered the execution of projects. Additionally, rampant fears of corruption and financial leakages eroded public trust and diverted potential resource flow from their intended beneficiaries. According to Kolawole (2021), such corruption badly disrupted the overall effectiveness of poverty programs and stymied momentum towards achieving Vision 20:2020 of inclusive development goals.

Despite these challenges, Yar'Adua's time in office formed a good base for those who came after him. A significant accomplishment of the Administration was making Vision 20:2020, which focused on reducing poverty, a national priority and part of a strong economic development program (Abanikannda & Adekomi, 2021). The Administration introduced significant institutional changes to improve the fit between policies and anti-poverty actions. The government tried to unite different poverty programs under one department and introduced new systems to keep them accountable and coordinated. Although results did not appear at once, making it easier for poverty alleviation efforts to grow and be sustained was necessary.

Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's presidency was essential and challenging when fighting poverty in Nigeria. The focus of his Administration increased on setting new policies that helped reduce poverty by institutionalizing NAPEP and developing human capital. However, problems with political instability, financial management, and struggling governance put progress at significant risk. The poverty figures have not seen major improvement yet, but what was done helped later administrations create and expand programs to fight poverty in Nigeria. Yar'Adua played a key role in highlighting the main issues involved in poverty reduction, the difficulties of doing so in a fragile environment, and the need for focus and strong institutions to achieve lasting results.

2. Goodluck Jonathan Administration (2010–2015): Expansion and Policy Shifts

Under President Goodluck Jonathan, the government broke new ground in combating poverty by increasing and diversifying its anti-poverty strategies as part of Vision 20:2020. According to the vision, Nigeria would be among the top 20 economies by 2020, and reducing poverty would remain important for sustainable development. Mohammed et al. (2022) noted that Jonathan's government attempted to deal with poverty head-on using fresh programs, greater financial resources, and more attention on youth development and social help.

YouWIN! was one of the main programs Jonathan launched. Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria is known as the (YEWIN) program. The idea behind this was to help young Nigerians with bright business ideas to become entrepreneurs by providing grants, mentoring, and training. Because youth unemployment in Nigeria is now so high and causes more poverty, the YouWIN! The initiative was implemented to address the problem and help the country's economy depend less on oil (Kolawole, 2021). The initiative was widely recognized worldwide and at home for encouraging youth and boosting local economies. YouWIN! Support companies owned by the youth to help them find work and to encourage them to think and act independently.

The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) was established after YouWIN! as a result of the government's decision to remove some petroleum subsidies in 2012, which made many Nigerians worry about higher living costs. SURE-P was planned to spend the money saved from subsidy reforms on infrastructure and poverty relief measures. Its main objective was to advance health and education and directly help impoverished people through cash transfers (Eneh, 2011). The government tried to support economic and social growth in neglected areas through SURE-P by providing better social services.

As part of NAPEP, the Administration worked on increasing skill training and widening access to microcredit services for impoverished people. It was recognized that both rural and urban areas in Nigeria have different needs, so the expansion worked to help individuals start their businesses and help small businesses expand (Ishidi & Babanyaya, 2020). As a result of this approach, it was understood that poverty is different in each place and time and requires different actions for each situation.

In finance, the Jonathan administration proved itself by almost tripling spending on social investment to almost 1 percent of the country's GDP. With these investments, millions of Nigerians could participate in various programs; YouWIN supported thousands of young entrepreneurs! Moreover, this has contributed to gradual shifts in employment patterns (Mohammed et al., 2022). Similarly, SURE-P infrastructure projects increased access to critical health and education services in many hard-to-reach regions, building the social capital necessary for sustainable development (Abanikannda & Adekomi, 2021).

Nevertheless, all these efforts were commendable, but the poverty rate in Nigeria remained stagnant under Jonathan, with estimates of the poverty headcount reaching between 62 and 65 percent as of 2015 (Adeleke et al., 2023). Factors such as the structuring and context of poverty alleviation programs limited the overall effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs. Economic and social interventions could not keep up with the rapidly growing population, which diluted their impact and overwhelmed the resources working to improve people's lives. Moreover, although economic growth was positive, it was not sufficiently inclusive, as a result of which persistent inequalities in wealth distribution impeded poverty reduction outcomes (Arumede & Edwin, 2025).

Governance challenges critically undermined program implementation. This was characterized by widespread corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, leading to massive leakages and mismanagement of funds for poverty programs (Kolawole, 2021). For example, there were severe criticisms of SURE-P because of its lack of transparency and accountability, which eroded public trust and constrained SURE-P's reach and effectiveness (Chukwuemeka Akuche & Akindoyin, 2024). Likewise, YouWIN! was innovative but faced the challenge of sustainability in giving continuous support and monitoring of the beneficiaries after the initial funding (Mohammed et al., 2022).

Poverty alleviation efforts were also complicated by security challenges, most especially in the northern regions of Nigeria. Largescale displacement and disruption to livelihoods were caused by insurgency and conflicts, aggravating vulnerabilities and constraining the government's ability to deliver social service (Rjoub et al., 2021). Furthermore, poor targeting and weak data infrastructure constrained programs' ability to effectively identify and reach the most vulnerable groups, and consequently, interventions were not as effective (Ejemezu & Ajala, 2023).

President Goodluck Jonathan's Administration widened Nigeria's poverty reduction agenda, introduced innovative intervention programs, and increased financial commitments. However, structural barriers persisted, as did governance deficits and external shocks to preclude significant reductions in poverty being measured during this period. The experience underscores that ambition in poverty reduction policy design is necessary but insufficient for lasting success, which also depends critically on strong governance, inclusive economic growth, and appropriate investment in targeted social programs.

3. **Muhammadu Buhari Administration (2015–2020): Introduction of New Plans and Results**

President Muhammadu Buhari began his Administration in 2015 when Nigeria's economy and security were in serious trouble. Nigerians were worried about poverty, loss of jobs, and insecurity, which worsened the existing problems for the citizens. Because these issues needed to be addressed urgently, the Buhari government introduced the Social Investment Program (SIP) as a set of ambitious social intervention initiatives. The program aimed to boost poverty alleviation by giving more practical, broad, and precise support to people in need nationwide (Anam et al., 2023).

The SIP was built around the N-Power initiative, which was explicitly created to reduce youth unemployment. Young Nigerians in the education, agriculture, and healthcare sectors were given skills training and monthly payments by the government as part of N-Power. The program aimed to cut unemployment by training more than half a million people and helping them find jobs. Before long, this measure became one of Nigeria's most enormous social safety nets, with people noticing and joining in.

Along with N-Power, the government launched the CCT scheme to give financial aid to the poorest households every month. The transfers were granted only if families regularly sent their children to school and took them for health check-ups. Its goal was to provide immediate subsistence to families and simultaneously invest in human resources, an essential plan for stopping the cycle of poverty handed down from parents to children (Kolawole, 2021). In partnership with CCT, the Home-Grown School Feeding Program strived to offer free meals to millions of primary school pupils to help them stay healthy and remain in school. Besides helping solve malnutrition, this program helped increase education, which has long-term benefits for society.

The Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) helped micro-business owners, small traders, and artisans by offering them simple loans. It worked to boost local economic growth, make sure more people are included financially, and help disadvantaged groups build stable careers (Mohammed et al., 2022). The Buhari administration significantly boosted the SIP, transferring billions of naira yearly. These investments provided more social protection than any previous government, indicating a change to active social investment and poverty relief (Ejemezu & Ajala, 2023).

During 2016 and 2017, the country went through its worst economic recession in decades because rock-bottom oil prices kept the government and many households from earning money. The cost of living rose sharply, leading to more poverty (Anam et al., 2023). At the same time, growing insecurity in many parts of the world forced millions to move, which interrupted economic activities and made it harder to deliver benefits from social services (Rjoub et al., 2021).

Different operational issues limited the effectiveness of the SIP. If payments were often delayed, the selected groups might not have been accurate, and there were problems with how administratively the programs were run; the programs did not reach as many people as expected. Even as efforts were made to add transparency and monitoring systems, established corruption and weak institutions continued to cause problems (Mubarak Magaji et al., 2024). Because of the economic downturn, less money was available to invest in communities, which limited the government's ability to respond to rising needs (Ejemezu & Ajala, 2023).

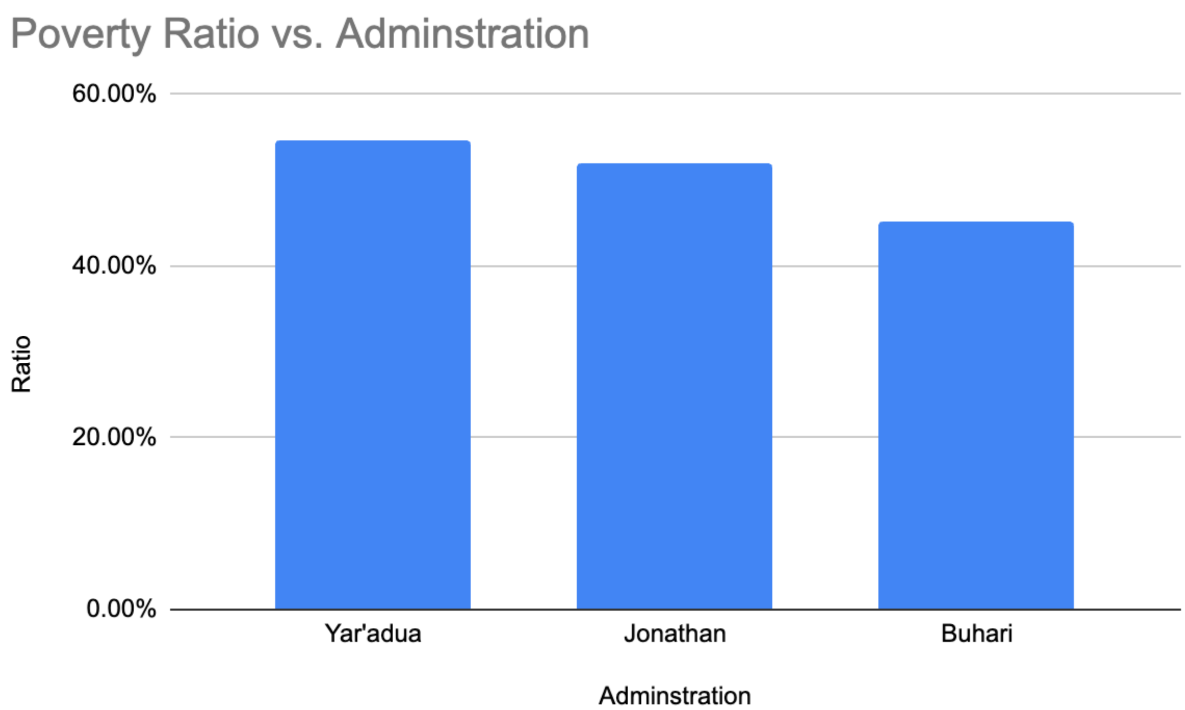
Buhari's Administration rolled out many poverty alleviation programs and introduced the Social Investment Program, but unpredictable shocks, continued security issues, and poor program implementation hampered its achievements. With social spending aimed at reducing poverty, the number of people living in poverty decreased.

Trends, progress, and challenges: Analysis.

5.1 Comparative Analysis of the Successes and Challenges in Poverty Reduction under President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, President Goodluck Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari

In an interview with Khalil-Babatunde (2022), she argued that Nigeria is a paradox of poverty and wealth due to inequality and disparity in resource allocation and research, and this is as a result of neoliberal practices, because the number of resources is not a problem but rather allocation due to poor leadership, lack of political will and mismanagement of the resources. Using Nigeria's poverty alleviation efforts during the Yar'Adua (2007–2010), Jonathan (2010–2015), and Buhari (2015–2020) administrations for comparative evaluation, the study finds continuing challenges in reducing poverty despite progress in programmatic efforts and more social investment. This persistence is reflected in poverty data across these periods.

Figure 1: Poverty Headcount Ratio (%) by Administration bar chart

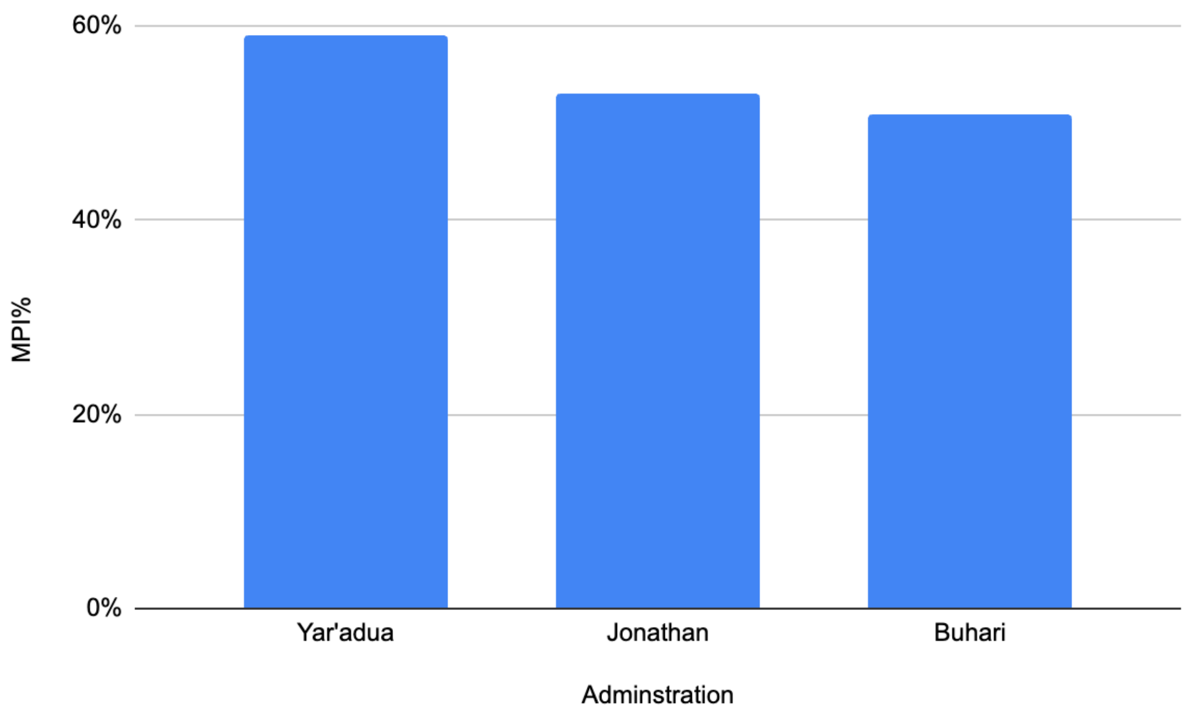


Source: Ishidi & Babanyaya, 2020

The poverty headcount ratio was around 54.7% throughout the Yar'Adua administration and did not change by the end of his tenure. The YouWIN and SURE-P programs were launched and scaled up by Jonathan's Administration, and the poverty rate decreased modestly to an estimated 52.1% (Ishidi & Babanyaya, 2020). The expansive Social Investment Program (SIP) large outlay by the Buhari administration, further reduced poverty, with estimates of around 45.3% by 2020 (Mohammed et al., 2022). Similarly, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which gauges these different deprivation dimensions, also slightly improved over this period (Adeleke et al., 2023). During Jonathan and Buhari, social protection coverage increased notably, and hundreds of thousands of people enrolled in N-Power and Conditional Cash Transfer programs reached vulnerable people (Kolawole, 2021). However, this extended coverage was insufficient to overcome structural challenges to the economic model and population pressures.

In assessing the impact of the poverty reduction programs of each Administration, the preparatory poverty reduction programs of the Yar'Adua era were mainly about the realignment of institutions and formulation of policy (Abanikannda & Adekomi, 2021). Limited funding and short-term did not allow for any serious program scale-up or outcome realization (Ejemezu & Ajala, 2023).

Figure 2: Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI% %) by Administration



Source: Adeleke et al., 2023

While expanded youth empowerment and social safety net programs increased visibility and participation, implementation inefficiencies, weak monitoring, and corruption constrained these programs during Jonathan's tenure (Mohammed et al., 2022). Although a few entrepreneurial successes were recognized, many programs were unsustainable or did not reach the poorest (Kolawole, 2021). Modest economic growth in the Administration's hands was partial and did not extend to marginal regions; poverty reduction was not broad (Adeleke et al., 2023).

The N-Power and CCT programs were examples of the shift that the Buhari administration's Social Investment Program represented in the direction of direct poverty alleviation and social protection. Operational challenges like delayed disbursements and poor data management with improved targeting mechanisms reduced impact (Mubarak Magaji et al., 2024). Additionally, the Administration faced an economic recession, inflation, and security crises, significantly increasing vulnerability and offsetting program benefits (Anam et al., 2023; Rjoub et al., 2021).

Several factors fueled mixed progress or decline in poverty reduction. Second, funding grew over time but was often unpredictable, with disbursements delayed and inefficient, limiting program reach (Ejemezu & Ajala, 2023). Secondly, while the policy focus moved from foundation institution building to social investment, implementation capacity was outpaced by ambition (Ishidi & Babanyaya, 2020). Thirdly, political will was inconsistent; though Buhari's Administration was resolute in its commitment, as exemplified by SIP, governance challenges continued, and public trust and resource effectiveness were eroded (Obilor & Amadi, 2024). Fourth, weak governance structures and corruption were all-pervasive, leading to the inefficient use of funds and accurate targeting of beneficiaries (Kolawole, 2021). Ultimately, poverty was compounded by macroeconomic volatility, dependence on oil revenues, escalating insecurity in parts of the country, and overwhelming social protection efforts (Anam et al., 2023; Rjoub et al., 2021).

Table 1: Poverty Indicators Across Nigerian Administrations (2007–2020)

Administration	Poverty Headcount (%)	Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	Notes
Yar'Adua (2007–2010)	~54.7%	High	Limited change; foundational phase
Jonathan (2010–2015)	52.1%	High	There is a slight decrease; regional disparities persist
Buhari (2015–2020)	45.3%	High	There is a slight decrease in poverty; recession and insecurity impact

Source: Ishidi & Babanyaya, 2020

These findings are synthesized to show that, although poverty alleviation under Vision 20:2020 has progressively broadened in scope, scale, and coverage, systemic problems have limited the results. However, the groundwork laid at the initial stage during the tenure of Yar'Adua was necessary but not effectively adequate to drive poverty reduction without following political stability and improving institutional capacity (Abanikannda & Adekomi, 2021). Despite Jonathan's Administration's policy and program diversity progress, governance deficits and security issues were blunted (Mohammed et al., 2022). To be sure, Buhari's Administration's expansive social investment initiatives were policy maturity in terms of direct poverty relief, but they were thwarted by economic recession and insecurity (Mubarak Magaji et al., 2024). During the Yar'adua/Jonathan regime, their programme of YouWin! was allocated an estimated $60 million in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communication Technology, the Ministry of Youth Development, and support from the =Department for International Development and the World Bank. Furthermore, under the Jonathan administration, the Sure-P programme was allocated 441 billion naira between 2012 and 2014 (Business Day, 2014). Whereas under the Buhari administration, the National Social Investment Programme, which includes N-Power, GEEP, school feeding programme, and conditional cash transfer,s received an estimated 470,825 billion naira between 2016 and 2019 (Sanni, 2019).

The biggest lesson is that political will and leadership consistency are hugely important. Political instability, policy discontinuity, and weak accountability mechanisms foiled poverty reduction efforts across successive administrations and varying degrees (Obilor & Amadi, 2024). This is consistent with wider development literature on the importance of leadership in determining how resources are prioritized and policies are implemented (Karimi et al., 2023). In addition, institutional capacity and governance quality are identified as enabling or constraining factors. Program implementation was weakened by corruption, poor coordination among agencies, and ineffective monitoring across administrations (Kolawole, 2021). Institutional frameworks must be strengthened and transparent for effective program improvement, and data-driven management practices must be established (Ejemezu & Ajala, 2023).

This is Nigeria's story, but it is a story that has been played out globally in other developing countries, where governance and economic vulnerabilities frustrate social protection and poverty reduction efforts. Strong political commitment, integrated policy frameworks, and strong monitoring systems were behind the poverty reduction that countries such as Brazil (Bolsa Família program) and South Africa (extensive social grants) have realized (Loewe et al., 2021). On the flip side, insecurity and economic shocks in fragile states often make poverty reduction outcomes of social investments unsustainable (Krampe, Hegazi, and VanDeveer, 2021). Third, poverty is multidimensional, including income, health, education, and security, necessitating holistic and site-specific approaches. While Nigeria's social investment programs tackle some dimensions, these must be accompanied by other broad economic reforms, inclusive growth, and conflict resolution strategies for real impact (Adeleke et al., 2023; Rjoub et al., 2021).

According to Bitrus Chinoko, who is the Director General for Management Development, outlined multiple challenges to national development planning and implementation, which are; (i) lack of continuity (ii) inefficiency of government (iii) high inflation (iv) lack of political will, and when there is sectionalism (v) plans are not tied to specifics (vi) budget does not align with the national development plan (vii) no funding because, the country's revenue goes into servicing of debts (viii) white elephant projects (ix) plans do not carry the beneficiaries (the people) along when preparing it (x) no planning officers to execute. These are very important points to note as they were reiterated by other interviewees especially the issue of continuity. Ribadu emphasised on the lack of continuity, because every government comes with their own agenda or plan that they want to execute hence, bringing an end to that of the previous government. For instance, the Obasanjo presidency had the NEEDs program and Vision 2020, but the coming of President Yar'adua stopped it and there was the 7-point agenda, accordingly the Jonathan government, brought the Transformation Agenda, then the Buhari government brough the Economic Recovery and Growth Program, and now under the new government of Bola Ahmed Tinubu there is the Renewed Hope

Agenda. However, Felix Okonkwo, who is the Director of Macroeconomic Analysis in the Ministry of Budget and National Planning, stated that the Renewed Hope Agenda has been mapped into the current medium-term plan of Nigeria, which is the NDP 2021-2025. Furthermore, he stated that to ensure continuity of plans, currently, there is a development planning and project continuity bill, which criminalises abandonment of ongoing plans. This legislation will encourage the completion of projects across different regimes, which is essential to balanced growth. Disruption and abandonment of development projects such as renovation of schools and hospitals, and infrastructure building is a waste of resources and sets the country back.

Conclusion and recommendations

Nigeria's Vision 20:2020 poverty alleviation efforts progressed significantly, but persistent governance deficits, economic shocks, and implementation constraints prevented their full impact. Expanding programs and adding funding did little to stem poverty. Nigeria must improve political commitment and continuity in poverty policies across administrations to improve future outcomes. This requires building institutional capacity to manage the program more transparently and to provide real-time monitoring. Resources should be protected; public trust should be built by intensifying anti-corruption measures.

In particular, programs must be better targeted and inclusive for vulnerable rural and conflict-affected populations. These are necessary to create an environment conducive to poverty reduction and address macroeconomic stability and security issues. Lastly, linking social protection to wider reforms will translate growth into shared prosperity. These areas will help Nigeria develop more resilient and effective poverty alleviation strategies and improve the lives of millions while moving toward Sustainable Development Goals.

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