

FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

Nnatu Stella Obioma, Ph.D.

Department of Sociology/Anthropology,
NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Email: so.nnatu@unizik.edu.ng

&

Nwankwo, Franklin Chibuike

Department of Sociology,
Madonna University Nigeria, Okija Campus

Email: franklinnwankwo20@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social policy constitutes of guidelines and interventions for changing, maintenance or creation of living conditions that are conducive to human welfare. They are government programmes or initiatives that are intentionally designed to address and mitigate social problems (hunger, poverty and disease etc), improve human welfare and deal with a wide range of areas, such as education, health and employment, crime and justice. In Nigeria, social policy implementation, which involves translating the goals and objectives of social policies into tangible accomplishments, leaves little to be desired. This review paper, anchored on Johan Galtung's (1978) Basic Needs Approach examined factors affecting implementation of social problems in Nigeria. It frowned at the poor state of social policy implementation and recommended among other measures, the need for adequate funding of social policy implementation initiatives. The paper also emphasized control of corruption and an end to frequent changes in social policy directions arising from changes in government. These steps constitute viable strategies for hitch free social policy implementation in Nigeria.

Keywords: social policy, public policy, welfare, Nigeria, public participation

INTRODUCTION

Government of nation states across the world usually strives to provide their citizens with the best conditions of social welfare, social protection and improved economic situations. They also work to ensure that living environment of citizens are conducive, such that they have access to social services such as quality housing (shelter), food, water, health services, good roads, education, electricity, security, employment and reasonable income for upkeep etc.

In view of the importance of the above listed social services, governments usually set up plans of action, strategies or guidelines to ensure steady provision of those services. Such plans of action are referred to as 'social policy' also called 'public policy'. Hence, some scholars specifically see social or public policy as the things the government does, or does not do, to solve problems in society. This includes government-set objectives relating to the health, welfare, and safety of the country.

All levels of government (municipal, state, and federal) make public policy decisions. Examples of issues addressed by public policy include public health, criminal justice, gun rights, immigration, reproductive rights, drug use, education, and disaster preparedness. The field of social policy is not a discipline of its own but subject area that cut across several disciplines, such as law, sociology, economics, psychology, political science etc. According to Spicker (2008), the study of social policy, originally known as social administration mainly pertains to social services and includes social security, housing, health, social work and education. These issues are being described as the 'big five' concerns of social policies.

According to Colleen, Shawn, and Sasha (2022) social or public policy can be classified into two sub areas, namely foreign policy and domestic policy. The emphasis of this review paper is on Nigeria's domestic or internal social policy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on Johan Galtung's (1978) Basic Needs Approach which emphasizes meeting man's needs for survival such as food, shelter, safety, social amenities, improved social living conditions, and shared values etc. Galtung outlined two contrasting ways to meet man's basic needs, which are the top down technocratic approach, and the sustainable community development approach in which people participate fully toward meeting basic needs. Irrespective of specific thrust of any social policy, it is always intended to address man's basic need in society. However, policy implementation in Nigeria has failed to improve social living conditions and are yet to meet the basic needs of all social groups in the country, given rise to group disparities.

BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON MEANING AND USES OF SOCIAL POLICY

According to Gilbert and Terrell (1988), social policy is both a process and a product. As a process, it consists of sequential steps to be followed in problem solving. As product, social policies are laws, programs, judicial decisions and administrative directives.

Huttman (1981) see social policies as plans of action and strategies for providing services. She adds that social policies have the goal of sound human relations. On his part, Jannon (1994) regards social policy as a collective strategy to address social problem. He affirms that defining social policy as goal-driven, problem solving has several advantages.

Uzoh (2011), defined social policy as guidelines and interventions for the changing, maintenance or creation of living conditions that are conducive to human welfare. Irrespective of mode of conceptualization, social policies are intended to address social problems and provide affordable social services and public amenities. They aim to improve the general welfare of the country's citizens and to promote a healthy national economy. Generally social policy is the term given to government policies, actions, programmes, or initiatives that are intended to address and mitigate social problems. They are designed for human welfare and deal with a wide range of areas, from education, health and employment to crime and justice. Social policies aim to alleviate social problems such as hunger, poverty and mental illness.

MAJOR THRUSTS OF DOMESTIC SOCIAL POLICY ACROSS NATION STATES

Domestic policies are policies that are generally confined to problems and issues inside the country. They generally address the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the country. According to Colleen, Shawn, and Sash (2022), domestic policy can be further broken up into several thrusts or sub-categories such as:

- a. **Welfare Social Policy**, which relates to issues that affect the general welfare of everyday citizens. In the United States, this includes social insurance programs, like Social Security and unemployment insurance. It also includes public assistance programs, like cash assistance, housing assistance and food stamps.
- b. **Public Health Policy**, which focuses on the health of the population and includes both efforts to promote and protect the health of the population. Federal programs providing health care include Medicare and Medicaid. Public health also involves implementing and enforcing regulations protecting the public, such as food and drug regulations.
- c. **Education Policy**, which is concerned with the education of citizens. Traditionally, in Nigeria, primary and secondary education has been under the purview of local government, but federal and state governments have become more involved.
- d. **Environmental Policy**, which focuses on regulating the manner in which we interact with the environment, such as clean water and air regulations. It may also include promoting certain sustainable activities, such as recycling and development of renewable energy sources.
- e. **Criminal Justice Policy**, which is concerned with law and order. It involves deciding what behavior will be illegal and how perpetrators will be punished. It may also involve crime prevention programs, such as anti-drug campaigns.
- f. **Economic Policy**, which attempts to create and maintain a strong economy. Economic policy seeks to accomplish its aim of building strong economy through manipulation of the tax rate, government spending, interest rates and money supply. Economic policy also involves regulating business activities and consumer transactions.

SPECIFIC SOCIAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS /TYPES IN NIGERIA

Social Development Policy in Nigeria

The Human Development Index (HDI) puts Nigeria in a low human development category. This implies that social development of Nigeria is poor and needs improvement. There is need to increase local employment through public works programmes and promote higher education opportunities, as well as improvements in teacher-students ratio and overall education quality through investment. Social Development Policy in Nigeria further proposes for special schools for girls to bridge the education gap between boys and girls, especially in northern parts of Nigeria.

National Social Protection Policy

According to National Social Safety-Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO, 2023), the Social Protection Policy for Nigeria is an umbrella policy framework that incorporates related social agenda paradigms, all intended to reduce poverty and provide a life of dignity for all citizens of Nigeria.

Social protection is a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach that contributes to poverty reduction, articulating policy priorities of government towards sustainable development. The policy seeks to pursue this through enhanced reduction of inequality and inequity as well as the provision of social incentives. This is imperative to foster human-centered approach to development so as to enhance investment in human and social capital. Development through good health and education, good governance including sound macro-economic milieu, among others, are essential for the promotion of inclusive growth, equality, security and a life of dignity. National Social Safety-Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO, 2023) asserts that the policy also includes some safety net programmes some of which are highlighted below.

National Cash Transfer Programme

The National Cash Transfer Programme also known as Household Uplifting Programme (HUP) is one of the social safety nets programmes anchored by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The programme commenced in September, 2016. It was conceived as part of the Federal Government of Nigeria's (FGN) larger growth and social inclusion strategies aimed at addressing key social concerns in the country. It is a component of National Social Safety Nets Project (NASSP) which is supported by the World Bank, to provide financial support to targeted poor and vulnerable Nigerian households.

The programme is focused on responding to deficiencies in capacity and lack of investment in human capital, especially amongst our poorest citizens. Beneficiaries of the programme are mined from the National Social Register (NSR), comprising State Social Registers (SR) of poor and vulnerable households. The SRs are being developed with the training, supervision and guidance from the National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office in Abuja.

The programme is designed to deliver timely and accessible cash transfers to beneficiary households and sets to support development objectives and priorities, to achieve specific outcomes as outlined below:

- A. Improve household consumption.
- B. Increase in utilization of health and nutrition services.
- C. Improve school enrolment and attendance.
- D. Improve environmental sanitation and management.
- E. Encourage household financial and asset acquisition.
- F. Engage beneficiaries in sustainable livelihood.

The programme has 3 components which are as follows:

- A. Base Cash Transfer
- B. Top-Up based on State selected conditions and
- C. Livelihood support

The Youth Empowerment and Social Support Operations (YESSO)

They works to increase access of poor and vulnerable youths to employment opportunities in all participating states and to provide targeted cash transfers to the poor, vulnerable and internally displaced people (IDPs) in the North East states. This programme aims to reach over 500,000 youth to receive life skills training and re-orientation and another 1.5 million through the public workfare.

The Community and Social Development Project (CSDP)

This is the national flagship project that provides grants for human capital development of communities and vulnerable groups to enable them to embark on various development agenda. Its main areas of focus are in the following sectors; Education, Health, Rural Electrification, potable water supply, Transportation, Socio-economic development, environment/natural resources.

Other Social Policy Frameworks in Nigeria include

National Health Policy: This type of social policy focuses on health of the population. It ensures that health care get to all members of the public both poor and rich. National health insurance services are one of the components health social policies.

Housing Social Policy: This is type of social policy focuses on provision of houses to civil servants. There is a monthly deduction of funds from civil servants' salary in order to achieve its objectives. National housing fund is an example or component of this policy drive.

Population Social Policy: This is type of social policy focuses on population control or reduction. In Nigeria, National Population Policy prescribes four (4) children per women and maximum of four (4) women per man.

Education Social Policy: It focuses on how to improve education sector of the country. In Nigeria , Education Policy emphasize '6-3-3-4 scheme' which means 6 years for primary school, 3 years for Junior Secondary, 3 years for Senior Secondary and 4 years for University.

FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

According to Anisur (2016), social policy implementation involves translating the goals and objectives of a policy into an action. The systematic study of policy implementation is relatively new in the broader domain of social science.

Social Policy Implementation also refers to all steps and processes that are used to enforce, put in practice, apply or use social policies in order to achieve their set goals and solve problems they were intended to mitigate.

According to Nwankwo (2023), there are some challenges facing social policy implementation in Nigeria. He identified in particular the issues of lack of fund and corruption as well as mismanagement of fund.

Other problems confronting implementation of social policies in Nigeria include the following:

- i. **Corruption and misuse of funds:** Corruption and misuse of funds is one of the problems facing successful implementation of social policy in Nigeria. People who are in charge of those social policies tend to use fund meant for social policies for their personal use.
- ii. **Unavailability of fund:** Lack of fund for successful implementation because the budget may be small or poorly managed. This reason is why social policy are dropped or set side.
- iii. **Community Participation and Public Enlightenment:** Some policies lack community participation due to poor enlightenment;. community are not told about the social policy

- iv. **Frequent Changes in Policy by government:** Change in government and frequent interruption of social policy thrusts, affects its implementation, especially in Nigeria. Policies adopted by the previous administration are usually dropped by new government.
- v. **Culture:** Social policies that are in conflict with the culture and traditions of the people usually encounter extreme challenges and could fail due to lack of community support.
- vi. **Lack of Trained Personnel:** There are limited trained personnel assigned the task of implementation of social policies. Available workers do not understand the meaning and context of policy initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. There should be a person who will act as supervisor in order to ensure that the money for the policy are duly put in use and properly managed.
- b. Government should provide adequate fund to ensure policy implementation are done smoothly.
- c. There should be public enlightenment about the policy to the member of the public in order to understand what the policy is all about and also participate actively.
- d. There should be continuing on the side of government. This can help policy set to achieve its major objectives.
- e. Policy should be made in line with people's culture in order to ensure its objectives.
- f. There should be adequate training for personnel etc in order to understand the goals and objectives of a policy.

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