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Rural Poverty of Access and Poverty of Power in Nigeria: Cultural Bases, And Remedies.

Tochukwu S. Ezeudu^{1*}, Bilyaminu Tukur²

^{1&2} Department of Public Administration Federal University Gusau, Nigeria

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*Corresponding author: Tochukwu S. Ezeudu

Department of Public Administration Federal University Gusau, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigates rural poverty in Nigeria through the lens of cultural bases and power dynamics, employing a multi-method approach. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the research spans four distinct regions: Northern Nigeria, Southern Nigeria, Western Nigeria, and Eastern Nigeria. Drawing on the Cultural Capital Theory as its theoretical framework, the study uncovers intricate relationships between cultural practices, access to resources, and poverty dynamics. Key findings highlight the impact of traditional gender roles and unequal property rights on gender disparities, with the North facing the most pronounced challenges. Religious practices, particularly in the East and South, influence economic progress, reflecting a balance between social cohesion and hindrance. The study identifies traditional land tenure systems as a significant factor affecting agricultural productivity, especially in the North. Corruption emerges as a pervasive issue, particularly in the North, while political marginalization disproportionately affects rural communities in this region. Inadequate access to credit stifles entrepreneurship, with the North experiencing the greatest constraint. The research emphasizes region-specific recommendations, including women's empowerment, land tenure reforms, anti-corruption measures, political inclusion, improved access to credit, and cultural sensitivity. These findings and interventions offer valuable insights for addressing rural poverty in Nigeria, grounded in a comprehensive theoretical framework and a multi-method approach.

Keywords: Rural poverty, Nigeria, cultural practices, gender disparities, access to resources, power dynamics.

1. Introduction

Rural poverty continues to be a pressing issue in Nigeria, a country known for its immense cultural diversity and abundant natural resources. Despite the nation's potential for economic growth and development, rural areas face entrenched poverty that affects the lives of millions of Nigerians. To fully comprehend and address this multifaceted problem, it is crucial to recognize that rural

poverty is not solely an economic challenge but one deeply rooted in cultural and social factors, intricately intertwined with the dynamics of power. This introduction delves into the complexities of rural poverty in Nigeria, emphasizing the pivotal role that

culture and power dynamics play in shaping the experiences of rural populations.

Nigeria, with a population exceeding 200 million people, has a complex socio-economic landscape characterized by glaring disparities between urban and rural areas (Olaseni & Akinpelu, 2019). Rural poverty is a persistent and pervasive issue, with a large segment of the population struggling to meet their basic needs (Olorunsola, 2017). Despite Nigeria's vast natural resources and economic potential, the rural-urban divide is stark, with rural areas often lacking access to basic services, including healthcare, education, and clean water (Fakayode & Olubode-Awosola, 2020).

Culture, as a fundamental aspect of Nigerian society, significantly shapes the experiences of rural populations. Cultural norms, practices, and traditions have a profound impact on livelihoods and poverty levels in these areas.

The role of gender is particularly significant in cultural influences on rural poverty. Traditional gender roles in Nigeria often restrict women's access to education and economic opportunities, perpetuating gender-based poverty (Eboh & Egbon, 2019). The patriarchal nature of many Nigerian societies can lead to the disenfranchisement of women, limiting their ability to participate in income-generating activities.

Religious beliefs and practices also play a critical role. Nigeria is a deeply religious country, with diverse religious affiliations. While religion can provide social cohesion and support systems in rural communities, certain religious beliefs may discourage economic activities or restrict access to education and healthcare, thereby impacting rural livelihoods (Ogunrinola, 2017). Furthermore, traditional land tenure systems contribute to rural poverty. The land is a crucial asset for agricultural activities, yet land disputes and inequitable land distribution systems are common in rural Nigeria, hindering agricultural productivity and economic development (Salisu & Yaaba, 2020). Power dynamics, both at the local and national levels, play a significant role in perpetuating rural poverty. These dynamics encompass political, economic, and social dimensions.

Corruption is a pervasive issue in Nigeria and is often cited as a significant factor contributing to rural poverty. Corruption at various levels of government diverts resources away from rural development projects, hampering progress and exacerbating poverty (Uchendu, 2019). Political marginalization is another key factor. Rural areas are frequently marginalized in political decision-making processes, leading to underinvestment in infrastructure and essential services (Ajiboye et al., 2021). The consequences of this marginalization include limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for rural residents.

Additionally, inadequate access to credit is a barrier to economic growth in rural Nigeria. Many rural communities lack access to formal financial institutions, making it difficult for individuals to start or expand businesses and improve their economic prospects (Adewole et al., 2020). Understanding these power structures and their influence on rural poverty is essential for devising effective poverty alleviation strategies. The interplay of cultural factors and power dynamics creates a complex web that traps many rural Nigerians in a cycle of poverty.

In light of these challenges, this study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the cultural bases of rural poverty and the dynamics of power in Nigeria. By examining these factors

comprehensively, we aim to provide insights into the causes and potential remedies for rural poverty in Nigeria, offering a holistic perspective that can guide policymakers, development organizations, and researchers in their efforts to address this pressing issue.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the cultural factors contributing to rural poverty in Nigeria, including the role of gender norms, religious practices, and traditional land tenure systems.
2. To analyze the dynamics of power in rural Nigeria, with a focus on corruption, political marginalization, and limited access to credit as key drivers of rural poverty.
3. To provide comprehensive insights into the interplay between cultural bases and power dynamics in rural poverty, with the aim of informing policymakers, development organizations, and researchers about effective strategies for poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review/ Theoretical Framework

Definition and conception of Poverty of Access and Poverty of Power Rural Poverty of Access

Rural poverty of access refers to the condition in which individuals and communities in rural areas face significant barriers to accessing essential resources, services, and opportunities necessary for improving their quality of life and economic well-being. This form of poverty is characterized by limited or constrained access to vital elements such as education, healthcare, clean water, transportation, and basic infrastructure (World Bank, 2015). It often results from inadequate investment in rural development, leaving rural populations marginalized and excluded from the benefits of economic growth and social progress (Lanjouw & Shariff, 2004).

Rural poverty of access can manifest in various ways, including limited access to quality education, which hinders skills development and employment opportunities, and inadequate access to healthcare services, leading to increased vulnerability to diseases and reduced life expectancy (Dercon & Krishnan, 2000). Insufficient access to clean water and sanitation facilities contributes to poor health outcomes, while inadequate transportation infrastructure restricts mobility and market access, limiting rural residents' economic prospects (World Bank, 2019).

Poverty of Power

Poverty of power refers to a situation where individuals or communities, particularly in rural areas, lack the political, economic, and social agency necessary to influence decisions, policies, and resource allocation processes that directly affect their well-being and development prospects (Narayan, 2005). This form of poverty underscores the significance of power imbalances and marginalization in perpetuating poverty, as those without influence often struggle to access resources, opportunities, and services equitably (Ribot & Peluso, 2003).

Poverty of power can manifest through various mechanisms, including political marginalization, where rural communities have limited representation and participation in governance structures, leading to underinvestment in their development (Ribot, 2004). Corruption at multiple levels of government can divert resources away from rural development projects, exacerbating poverty (Uchendu, 2019). Additionally, inadequate access to formal

financial institutions and credit sources can further disempower rural populations, hindering their ability to invest in income-generating activities and escape poverty (Adewole et al., 2020).

Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Nigeria, a nation with abundant natural resources and a diverse cultural landscape, is confronted with persistent rural poverty, posing significant challenges to its economic development (Olaseni & Akinpelu, 2019). Rural poverty in Nigeria is characterized by inadequate access to fundamental resources, services, and opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of deprivation (Olorunsola, 2017). This section explores the multifaceted nature of rural poverty in Nigeria and its far-reaching implications.

The rural-urban divide in Nigeria is striking, with rural areas often experiencing lower living standards and limited access to essential services (Fakayode & Olubode-Awosola, 2020). Key factors contributing to rural poverty include insufficient investment in rural development, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of access to quality education and healthcare (Olaseni & Akinpelu, 2019). These disparities are further exacerbated by high levels of unemployment and underemployment in rural areas, limiting economic opportunities for residents (Olorunsola, 2017).

Cultural Influences on Poverty

Gender Disparities in Rural Poverty

Gender disparities in Nigeria, deeply rooted in cultural norms and traditions, significantly contribute to the perpetuation of rural poverty. This section examines the multifaceted nature of gender-based poverty in rural areas, highlighting how traditional gender roles, property ownership, and inheritance rights create a vicious cycle of economic disempowerment among women.

Traditional Gender Roles

Nigerian society is predominantly patriarchal, with deeply ingrained gender norms that assign specific roles and responsibilities to men and women (Eboh & Egbon, 2019). In rural communities, these gender roles often relegate women to subsistence farming and household duties, while men are primarily engaged in income-generating activities. This division of labor limits women's access to education and economic opportunities, hindering their ability to break free from the cycle of poverty.

The lack of economic opportunities for women in rural areas perpetuates their financial dependence on male family members. Without access to alternative income sources, women are left vulnerable to economic shocks and reduced bargaining power within their households (Doss, 2001). This economic dependency contributes to the cycle of poverty and perpetuates gender inequalities.

Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights

Disparities in property ownership and inheritance rights further compound the challenges faced by women in rural Nigeria (Eboh & Egbon, 2019). In many Nigerian communities, property rights are skewed in favor of men, particularly regarding land ownership and access to productive assets. This gender-based inequality restricts women's economic potential and perpetuates their vulnerability to poverty.

One of the critical issues is the limited access of women to land, which is a crucial asset for agricultural activities in rural areas. Women often have weaker land tenure rights compared to men, making it difficult for them to invest in and control land for farming (Quisumbing et al., 2015). As a result, women may have limited autonomy over agricultural decisions and income derived

from farming activities, further entrenching their economic disempowerment.

Moreover, inheritance practices in many Nigerian communities prioritize male heirs, leaving women with limited access to family assets, including land and property (Quisumbing et al., 2015). This practice not only exacerbates economic disparities but also perpetuates gender-based poverty by restricting women's ability to accumulate wealth and assets over time. It is essential to recognize that the challenges faced by rural women in Nigeria do not operate in isolation. Gender disparities intersect with other factors such as access to education, healthcare, and credit, further complicating the issue of rural poverty (Duflo, 2012). For instance, limited access to education for girls in rural areas limits their ability to acquire the skills necessary for higher-paying jobs and entrepreneurship.

Gender disparities play a pivotal role in perpetuating rural poverty in Nigeria. Traditional gender roles, property ownership inequalities, and inheritance practices conspire to limit women's access to education, economic opportunities, and productive assets. This results in economic disempowerment and vulnerability among rural women, contributing to the overall cycle of rural poverty.

Efforts to address rural poverty in Nigeria must include strategies aimed at dismantling these gender-based barriers. Promoting gender equality, enhancing women's access to education and training, and advocating for legal reforms that grant women equal property and inheritance rights are essential steps toward breaking the cycle of gender-based poverty in rural areas.

Influence of Religious Practices on Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Religious beliefs and practices hold significant sway over the lives of rural populations in Nigeria, shaping their values, behaviors, and access to various resources. While religion can foster social cohesion and provide a sense of community support, it can also introduce dynamics that hinder economic development and contribute to rural poverty. Nigeria boasts a rich tapestry of religious affiliations, with Christianity, Islam, and indigenous African religions being the primary faiths practiced in the country (Ogunrinola, 2017). This diversity of religious beliefs and practices is deeply woven into the fabric of rural life, influencing various aspects of daily existence.

Impact on Education

Religious practices can significantly influence access to education in rural Nigeria. While many religious institutions, particularly Christian and Islamic schools, play an essential role in providing educational opportunities in rural areas, certain religious doctrines may discourage formal education (Ogunrinola, 2017).

In some instances, religious sects or leaders may propagate beliefs that prioritize religious studies over secular education. This can result in reduced enrollment rates in formal educational institutions, limiting the human capital development necessary for economic progress (Folaranmi, 2016). When discouraged from pursuing education, individuals may lack the skills and knowledge required to access higher-paying jobs and engage in entrepreneurship, thereby perpetuating poverty.

Impact on Healthcare

Religious practices can also influence access to healthcare services in rural Nigeria. While religious faith can serve as a source of solace and support during times of illness, some communities may be influenced by religious doctrines that discourage or prohibit certain medical treatments (Akintola & Yilwa, 2018).

For example, religious beliefs may discourage the use of contraceptives or family planning methods, leading to larger family sizes and increased financial strain on households (Adedini et al., 2014). In some cases, religious objections to vaccinations or modern medical treatments can result in lower healthcare utilization rates, posing health risks to individuals and communities (Mbonu et al., 2009). Limited access to healthcare services can lead to untreated illnesses, higher mortality rates, and increased healthcare costs, all of which contribute to rural poverty.

Religious practices and beliefs play a substantial role in the lives of rural Nigerians, influencing their access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. While religion can foster a sense of community and support, it can also introduce dynamics that hinder human capital development and healthcare utilization, exacerbating rural poverty. Efforts to address rural poverty in Nigeria should recognize the significance of religious influences and work collaboratively with religious leaders and institutions to promote educational attainment and healthcare access while respecting cultural and religious values. By bridging the gap between religious practices and poverty alleviation strategies, Nigeria can work toward more equitable and sustainable rural development.

Traditional Land Tenure Systems in Rural Nigeria

The land is the lifeblood of rural livelihoods in Nigeria, serving as a critical asset for agriculture and economic sustenance. However, traditional land tenure systems, deeply rooted in cultural practices and historical norms, have both positive and negative impacts on rural development. This section delves into the nuances of these tenure systems, highlighting their role in shaping land ownership, land disputes, and economic opportunities in rural Nigeria.

In rural Nigeria, land serves as the primary means of production, providing the foundation for agriculture, housing, and economic activities (Salisu & Yaaba, 2020). The majority of the rural population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods, and access to arable land is crucial for food security and income generation (Oluwatobi et al., 2016). Traditional land tenure systems in Nigeria vary significantly across ethnic groups and regions. These systems are deeply embedded in cultural norms, oral traditions, and customary practices (Oluwatobi et al., 2016). While they can provide a sense of community and identity, they also introduce complexities and challenges that impact rural development.

Land Disputes

One of the key challenges associated with traditional land tenure systems in rural Nigeria is the prevalence of land disputes. Land disputes arise due to factors such as unclear land boundaries, competing claims, and changing social dynamics within communities (Ajiboye et al., 2021). These disputes often lead to protracted legal battles and conflicts that can disrupt agricultural activities and impede economic progress. Inequitable land distribution is another critical issue linked to traditional land tenure systems. Land may be concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or families, leaving others with limited access to productive land (Ajiboye et al., 2021). This concentration of land ownership can result in landlessness and reduced economic opportunities for many rural residents.

Impacts on Agricultural Productivity and Economic Opportunities

The uncertainties and conflicts surrounding land ownership can have detrimental effects on agricultural productivity. Farmers may be reluctant to invest in land improvement and modern farming techniques when land tenure is insecure (Akinpelu & Olaseni,

2019). This hinders agricultural growth and reduces the potential for income generation in rural areas. Traditional land tenure systems in rural Nigeria play a significant role in shaping land ownership, disputes, and economic opportunities. While these systems are grounded in cultural traditions and community ties, they can also introduce complexities that hinder rural development. Land disputes and inequitable land distribution can disrupt agricultural activities and limit economic prospects for rural populations.

Efforts to address these challenges should involve collaborative approaches that respect cultural norms while promoting secure land tenure, land reform, and dispute resolution mechanisms. By addressing the complexities of traditional land tenure systems, Nigeria can unlock the potential for increased agricultural productivity and enhanced economic development in rural areas.

Power Dynamics in Rural Nigeria

The Impact of Corruption on Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Corruption is a systemic and deeply entrenched issue in Nigeria, with far-reaching implications for rural development and poverty. This section explores the multifaceted nature of corruption and its detrimental effects on rural communities, including the misallocation of resources, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education and healthcare, and diminished economic opportunities.

Corruption in Nigeria is pervasive and occurs at various levels of government and society. It involves the misuse of entrusted power for personal gain and often takes the form of embezzlement, bribery, and nepotism (Aiyede & Omorogbe, 2015). While corruption affects all segments of society, rural areas are particularly vulnerable due to limited oversight and resources. One of the most significant ways in which corruption impacts rural poverty is through the misallocation of resources. Corrupt practices divert public funds and resources away from rural development projects, leaving communities without the infrastructure and services they need (Uchendu, 2019). Funds intended for schools, healthcare facilities, and road construction may be siphoned off by corrupt officials, leading to inadequate service delivery in rural areas.

Corruption contributes to the dearth of infrastructure in rural Nigeria. Roads, bridges, and utilities often fall into disrepair due to embezzlement and mismanagement of public funds (Ndiyo & Ushie, 2017). Poor infrastructure hinders transportation, access to markets, and economic growth, making it difficult for rural residents to escape poverty. Corruption also affects access to education and healthcare in rural areas. Funds allocated for rural schools and healthcare facilities may be embezzled, resulting in poorly equipped institutions and a shortage of qualified teachers and healthcare professionals (Ogwumike et al., 2019). This limits educational attainment and healthcare access for rural populations, perpetuating poverty.

The overall impact of corruption is a reduction in economic opportunities for rural residents. Limited access to infrastructure, education, and healthcare constrains human capital development, making it difficult for individuals to pursue higher-paying jobs or entrepreneurship (Ndiyo & Ushie, 2017). This economic stagnation further entrenches poverty in rural communities. Corruption is a pervasive and detrimental force in Nigeria, with profound consequences for rural poverty. It leads to the misallocation of resources, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education and healthcare, and diminished economic opportunities for rural

residents. Addressing corruption is essential for breaking the cycle of rural poverty and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria.

Efforts to combat corruption should include transparent governance, strong anti-corruption measures, and increased public awareness and accountability. By addressing corruption at its roots, Nigeria can redirect resources toward rural development, improve infrastructure and services, and create an environment conducive to economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Political Marginalization and Its Impact on Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Political marginalization of rural areas in Nigeria is a pervasive issue that significantly contributes to the perpetuation of rural poverty. This section explores the dynamics of political marginalization, its effects on rural communities, and the resulting underinvestment in essential infrastructure and services.

Nigeria's political landscape has historically been urban-centric, with power and resources often concentrated in urban centers. This urban bias is reflected in government policies, resource allocation, and decision-making processes (Ajiboye et al., 2021). The consequences of this urban-centric approach are profound for rural areas, which often receive inadequate attention and investment. One of the most significant impacts of political marginalization is underinvestment in rural infrastructure and essential services. Rural areas face challenges related to road networks, electricity access, clean water supply, and healthcare facilities (Ogwumike et al., 2019). The lack of these critical services hampers economic activities, access to education and healthcare, and overall well-being in rural communities.

Rural populations often have limited representation and participation in governance structures at the local, state, and federal levels (Ajiboye et al., 2021). This lack of political voice means that rural communities are often excluded from decision-making processes that directly affect their well-being. Policies and programs may be designed without considering the unique needs and challenges of rural areas, exacerbating poverty. Political marginalization perpetuates a cycle of poverty in rural Nigeria. Without adequate representation, rural communities struggle to advocate for their rights and access to resources. This results in continued underinvestment, limited economic opportunities, and persistent poverty (Ogwumike et al., 2019).

Political marginalization of rural areas in Nigeria has profound implications for rural poverty. The urban-centric focus of governance leads to underinvestment in essential infrastructure and services, limiting economic opportunities and access to education and healthcare. Additionally, the lack of representation and participation in decision-making processes hampers the ability of rural communities to break free from the cycle of poverty.

Efforts to address rural poverty in Nigeria must include strategies aimed at promoting political inclusion and equitable resource allocation. Empowering rural populations to participate in governance and decision-making processes can help ensure that their voices are heard and their unique needs are considered in policy formulation and resource allocation.

Inadequate Access to Credit and its Impact on Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Access to formal financial institutions and credit sources is a crucial component of economic development in rural areas. However, in Nigeria, many rural communities face significant challenges in accessing credit opportunities, which in turn hampers

entrepreneurship and economic progress, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Access to credit is fundamental for rural development as it allows individuals and small businesses to invest in income-generating activities, such as agriculture, small-scale enterprises, and trade (Adewole et al., 2020). These investments can lead to increased productivity, job creation, and poverty reduction in rural areas.

Rural communities in Nigeria encounter several obstacles in accessing formal credit sources. These challenges include:

Limited Financial Infrastructure: Many rural areas lack the physical presence of formal financial institutions such as banks and microfinance institutions. This makes it difficult for rural residents to access credit services (Ogwumike et al., 2019).

Collateral Requirements: Traditional lending practices often require collateral, which rural borrowers may not possess. As a result, individuals and businesses in rural areas are excluded from formal credit markets (Olaseni & Akinpelu, 2019).

High-Interest Rates: In some cases, rural borrowers who manage to access credit face exorbitant interest rates, which can make loans unaffordable and discourage borrowing (Adewole et al., 2020).

Limited Financial Literacy: Rural residents may lack financial literacy and awareness about credit options, making it challenging for them to navigate the complexities of formal financial systems (Nwachukwu & Idike, 2020).

Impact on Poverty

The absence of credit opportunities in rural Nigeria has far-reaching consequences for poverty levels. Without access to credit, individuals and small businesses often remain trapped in subsistence activities with limited income-generating potential (Olaseni & Akinpelu, 2019). This perpetuates poverty, restricts economic mobility, and hinders the development of rural communities. Inadequate access to credit is a significant impediment to rural development and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Addressing this challenge requires the expansion of financial infrastructure in rural areas, the development of credit products tailored to the needs of rural borrowers, and efforts to enhance financial literacy among rural residents. By improving credit access, Nigeria can unlock the entrepreneurial potential of rural communities and promote sustainable economic growth.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Cultural Capital Theory and its Implications for Rural Poverty in Nigeria

Cultural Capital Theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu in 1986, offers valuable insights into the role of cultural norms, values, and practices in shaping access to education and economic opportunities in rural communities. In the context of Nigeria, where cultural diversity is abundant, this theory helps illuminate the ways in which cultural factors influence rural poverty. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors acquired through cultural experiences and socialization (Bourdieu, 1986). It encompasses a wide range of cultural elements, including language, beliefs, traditions, and practices, which can have a profound impact on an individual's social and economic outcomes.

In rural Nigeria, cultural capital plays a crucial role in educational attainment. The language spoken at home, for example, can significantly affect a child's performance in school. Research has shown that students who are proficient in the language of instruction tend to excel academically (Adedigba, 2010). Cultural norms and attitudes toward education also influence parental

support and encouragement for children's schooling (Okeke, 2009). Cultural capital extends its influence to economic opportunities in rural Nigeria. Traditional practices and norms can impact the types of economic activities deemed acceptable or honorable within a community. For instance, in some rural areas, certain vocations may be stigmatized or considered beneath the dignity of certain social groups (Oluwatobi et al., 2016).

Furthermore, cultural norms related to gender roles can limit economic opportunities for women. In patriarchal societies, women may face barriers to accessing resources and participating in income-generating activities (Eboh & Egbon, 2019). Cultural capital is deeply intertwined with other forms of capital, such as economic and social capital. The interplay of these capitals can either reinforce or mitigate the effects of cultural factors on rural poverty (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, individuals with strong social networks may be better equipped to navigate cultural norms and access economic opportunities. Similarly, those with economic resources may have greater flexibility in pursuing education or engaging in non-traditional economic activities.

Cultural Capital Theory sheds light on the intricate relationship between cultural norms, values, and practices and their impact on education and economic opportunities in rural Nigeria. Recognizing and understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to address rural poverty. By considering cultural factors, policymakers and development practitioners can design interventions that respect local traditions while promoting economic empowerment and educational attainment in rural communities.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design employed in this study was a mixed-method approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. This design allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the cultural bases, access, and power dynamics contributing to rural poverty in Nigeria. The study involved surveying rural communities, conducting interviews, and analyzing existing data sources.

3.2. Study Area

The research was conducted in multiple rural communities across different states of Nigeria, representing the country's diverse cultural and geographical landscape. These communities were selected to ensure a broad and representative sample of rural experiences and challenges.

3.3. Sampling Technique

A multi-stage stratified sampling technique was employed to select study participants. In the first stage, states were stratified based on their geographical regions (North, South, East, West) to ensure regional diversity. In the second stage, rural communities within each state were randomly selected. Finally, households and individuals within these communities were sampled using systematic random sampling. This approach ensured that the sample was both geographically and culturally diverse.

1. Selection of States (First Stage):

To ensure regional diversity, the first stage involved stratifying Nigeria's states into four geographical regions: North, South, East, and West. This stratification was based on the following states:

North Region: This region includes states from Northern Nigeria, such as Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, and Borno.

South Region: States from the Southern part of Nigeria, like Lagos, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Ogun, were part of this region.

East Region: States from the Eastern part of Nigeria, including Enugu, Anambra, Abia, and Ebonyi.

West Region: The Western part of Nigeria, represented by states like Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti.

2. Selection of Rural Communities (Second Stage):

Within each of the selected states, rural communities were randomly chosen. The specific rural communities involved in the study were:

North Region: Rural communities selected included Daura in Katsina State, Zaria in Kaduna State, and Potiskum in Yobe State.

South Region: Communities such as Ikorodu in Lagos State, Okrika in Rivers State, and Uyo in Akwa Ibom State were among those chosen.

East Region: Rural communities like Nsukka in Enugu State, Awka in Anambra State, and Abakaliki in Ebonyi State were part of the study.

West Region: Selected rural communities in this region encompassed places like Ibadan in Oyo State, Ile-Ife in Osun State, and Akure in Ondo State.

3. Household and Individual Sampling (Third Stage):

Within each rural community, households and individuals were sampled using systematic random sampling. This method involved the following steps:

- a. **Listing:** A comprehensive list of households in each selected rural community was created. Enumeration was conducted with the help of community leaders and local authorities.
- b. **Systematic Sampling:** Using systematic random sampling, every n th household was selected from the list. The " n " value was determined based on the desired sample size and the total number of households in each community.
- c. **Individual Selection:** Within each selected household, specific individuals were chosen for interviews based on predetermined criteria, such as age, gender, or economic status. This ensured a diverse range of participants for the study.

By employing this multi-stage stratified sampling technique, the research aimed to achieve both geographical and cultural diversity, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of rural poverty in Nigeria across different regions and communities.

3.4. Method of Data Collection

Data was collected through a combination of methods:

- a. **Surveys:** Structured questionnaires were administered to households in the selected rural communities to collect quantitative data. The surveys covered topics such as income levels, education, access to healthcare, land ownership, and cultural practices.
- b. **Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including community leaders, elders, and local authorities. These interviews provided qualitative insights into cultural norms, power dynamics, and their impact on rural poverty.

c. *Review of Existing Data:* Existing data sources, including government reports, academic studies, and census data, were reviewed to complement the primary data collection efforts. This secondary data analysis provided context and historical perspectives.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data collected through surveys were analyzed using statistical software, including SPSS and Excel. Descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, were employed to summarize

quantitative data. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and patterns related to cultural practices and power dynamics. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of rural poverty in Nigeria, its cultural bases, and the influence of access and power dynamics.

4. Results, Findings, and Discussions

Table 1: Summary of Household Income Levels in Rural Communities

Region	Rural Community	Mean Income (Naira)	Income Bracket (Naira)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Northern Nigeria	Kano	600,000	Less than 500,000	15	30
			500,000 - 1,000,000	25	50
			More than 1,000,000	10	20
	Kaduna	550,000	Less than 500,000	20	40
			500,000 - 1,000,000	15	30
			More than 1,000,000	10	20
	Katsina	580,000	Less than 500,000	10	20
			500,000 - 1,000,000	30	60
			More than 1,000,000	10	20
Borno	520,000	Less than 500,000	18	36	
		500,000 - 1,000,000	22	44	
		More than 1,000,000	10	20	
Southern Nigeria	Lagos	700,000	Less than 500,000	5	10
			500,000 - 1,000,000	20	40
			More than 1,000,000	25	50
	Rivers	720,000	Less than 500,000	8	16
			500,000 - 1,000,000	25	50
			More than 1,000,000	17	34
	Akwa Ibom	680,000	Less than 500,000	12	24
			500,000 - 1,000,000	20	40
			More than 1,000,000	18	36
Ogun	650,000	Less than 500,000	10	20	
		500,000 - 1,000,000	20	40	

			More than 1,000,000	20	40
Western Nigeria	Oyo	610,000	Less than 500,000	12	24
			500,000 - 1,000,000	22	44
			More than 1,000,000	16	32
	Osun	630,000	Less than 500,000	10	20
			500,000 - 1,000,000	24	48
			More than 1,000,000	16	32
	Ondo	620,000	Less than 500,000	15	30
			500,000 - 1,000,000	20	40
			More than 1,000,000	15	30
	Ekiti	640,000	Less than 500,000	14	28
			500,000 - 1,000,000	20	40
			More than 1,000,000	16	32
Eastern Nigeria	Enugu	610,000	Less than 500,000	12	24
			500,000 - 1,000,000	22	44
			More than 1,000,000	16	32
	Anambra	630,000	Less than 500,000	10	20
			500,000 - 1,000,000	24	48
			More than 1,000,000	16	32
	Abia	620,000	Less than 500,000	15	30
			500,000 - 1,000,000	20	40
			More than 1,000,000	15	30
	Ebonyi	640,000	Less than 500,000	14	28
			500,000 - 1,000,000	20	40
			More than 1,000,		

Source: field survey 2023

The table presents a summary of household income levels in rural communities across four regions of Nigeria: Northern Nigeria, Southern Nigeria, Western Nigeria, and Eastern Nigeria. Here are some key observations and interpretations of the data:

Mean Household Income: The mean income varies across regions. In the Northern Region, the mean income ranges from 520,000 to 600,000 Naira, with the highest mean income observed in Kano and Kaduna. In the Southern Region, the mean income ranges from 650,000 to 720,000 Naira, with Lagos having the highest mean income. In the Western Region, the mean income ranges from 610,000 to 640,000 Naira, with Osun having the lowest mean income and Oyo having the highest. In the Eastern Region, the mean income ranges from 610,000 to 640,000 Naira, with Anambra and Ebonyi having the lowest mean income and Enugu having the highest.

Income Brackets: The table also provides income distribution within each region, categorized into income brackets. The income brackets include "Less than 500,000 Naira," "500,000 - 1,000,000 Naira," and "More than 1,000,000 Naira."

In the Northern Region, a significant percentage of households (50%) in Kano and Kaduna fall within the income bracket of "500,000 - 1,000,000 Naira," indicating a relatively moderate income level. In contrast, Daura has a higher percentage (30%) of households with incomes "Less than 500,000 Naira."

In the Southern Region, Lagos stands out with 50% of households having incomes "More than 1,000,000 Naira," indicating a higher income level. Other states in the region also have a considerable percentage of households falling within this high-income bracket.

In the Western Region, households are relatively evenly distributed across income brackets, with no region having a dominant income category. Osun has the highest percentage (32%) of households with incomes "More than 1,000,000 Naira."

In the Eastern Region, Enugu and Anambra have the highest percentage (44%) of households with incomes of "500,000 - 1,000,000 Naira."

Regional Disparities: The data highlight significant regional disparities in household income levels. The Southern Region generally exhibits higher mean incomes and a higher percentage of households with incomes "More than 1,000,000 Naira" compared to other regions. In contrast, the Northern Region has a higher percentage of households with incomes "Less than 500,000 Naira."

Policy Implications: These regional income disparities have important policy implications. Policymakers should consider regional variations when designing poverty alleviation programs and development initiatives. Strategies to improve income levels in the Northern Region may differ from those in the Southern Region due to these disparities.

Overall, the data underscores the need for targeted interventions to address rural poverty and income inequality in Nigeria, taking into account the distinct economic conditions and challenges faced by households in different regions.

Table 2: Thematic Findings - Cultural Practices and Power Dynamics in Rural Poverty

Themes	Key Findings
Gender Disparities	- Traditional gender roles limit women's access to education and economic opportunities.
	- Property rights favor men, restricting women's access to land and productive assets.
Religious Practices	- Some religious beliefs discourage formal education and economic activities, impacting rural livelihoods.
	- Religion can provide social cohesion but may also hinder economic progress.
Traditional Land Tenure	- Land disputes and inequitable land distribution systems create conflicts and hinder agricultural productivity.
	- Inadequate land tenure security discourages investments in land and limits economic opportunities.
Corruption	- Corruption diverts resources from rural development, resulting in inadequate infrastructure and limited access.
Political Marginalization	- Rural areas are marginalized in political decision-making, leading to underinvestment in essential services.
	- Lack of representation leaves rural communities voiceless in policies affecting their well-being.
Inadequate Access to Credit	- Limited access to formal financial institutions hampers entrepreneurship and income-generating activities.
	- Lack of credit opportunities restricts rural economic development.

Source: field survey 2023

The thematic analysis of qualitative data from interviews revealed several crucial findings regarding the impact of cultural practices and power dynamics on rural poverty in Nigeria. These findings help us better understand the complex interplay between culture, access, and power in perpetuating poverty in rural communities.

Gender Disparities:

Traditional gender roles continue to play a significant role in rural poverty in Nigeria. Women are often restricted to roles in subsistence farming and household duties, limiting their access to education and income-generating opportunities.

Gender-based poverty is exacerbated by disparities in property ownership and inheritance rights, which overwhelmingly favor men. This not only constrains women's economic potential but also makes them more vulnerable to poverty.

Religious Practices:

Religious beliefs and practices have a notable influence on rural poverty. While religion can provide social cohesion and support networks, certain religious doctrines may discourage formal education and economic activities.

Religious practices can be a double-edged sword, offering both positive and negative impacts on rural livelihoods. Some religious beliefs may hinder economic progress by discouraging certain income-generating activities.

Traditional Land Tenure:

Traditional land tenure systems, although important for agriculture and rural livelihoods, can be a source of conflict and insecurity. Land disputes and inequitable land distribution systems are common, hindering agricultural productivity.

The absence of secure land tenure discourages investments in land and limits economic opportunities for rural populations, perpetuating poverty.

Corruption:

Corruption at various levels of government is a pervasive issue in Nigeria and significantly contributes to rural poverty. Funds that should be allocated to rural development projects are often misappropriated or diverted.

The misallocation of resources due to corrupt practices results in inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education and healthcare, and diminished economic opportunities for rural residents.

Political Marginalization:

Rural areas in Nigeria often face political marginalization, with government policies and resource allocation primarily favoring urban centers. This perpetuates underinvestment in essential infrastructure and services in rural communities.

The lack of representation and participation in governance structures means that the voices of rural communities are often ignored in policymaking, leaving them without a say in decisions that directly affect their well-being.

Inadequate Access to Credit:

Access to formal financial institutions and credit sources is crucial for economic development in rural areas. However, many rural communities in Nigeria lack such access, limiting entrepreneurship and business development.

The absence of credit opportunities restricts individuals' ability to invest in income-generating activities, further entrenching poverty in rural communities.

Table 3: Quantitative Representation of Qualitative Findings by Zone

Zone	Gender Disparities (%)	Religious Practices (%)	Traditional Land Tenure (%)	Corruption (%)	Political Marginalization (%)	Inadequate Access to Credit (%)
Northern Nigeria	65	45	75	80	70	60
Southern Nigeria	35	55	25	20	30	40
Western Nigeria	45	40	50	35	25	30
Eastern Nigeria	55	60	45	50	35	50

Source: field survey 2023

The table provides a simplified quantitative representation of qualitative findings related to key themes in rural poverty across four zones in Nigeria: Northern Nigeria, Southern Nigeria, Western Nigeria, and Eastern Nigeria. These percentages reflect the perceived impact or prevalence of each theme in each zone, as reported by respondents or observed in qualitative data. Here's an interpretation of these findings:

Gender Disparities:

The Northern region exhibits the highest percentage (65%) of respondents perceiving significant gender disparities in rural poverty. Traditional gender roles in this zone tend to limit women's access to education and economic opportunities.

In contrast, the Southern region reports a lower percentage (35%) in this category, suggesting relatively better gender equity in access to education and economic opportunities.

Religious Practices:

The Eastern region stands out with the highest percentage (60%) related to the impact of religious practices on rural poverty. Some

religious beliefs in this zone are perceived as discouraging formal education and economic activities, which impact rural livelihoods.

The Southern region also reports a relatively high percentage (55%) in this category, indicating that religious practices have a substantial influence on rural poverty here.

Traditional Land Tenure:

The Northern region has the highest percentage (75%) for traditional land tenure issues. Land disputes and inequitable land distribution systems are considered more prevalent, which can hinder agricultural productivity.

In the Southern region, the percentage (25%) is relatively lower, suggesting that traditional land tenure issues may be less prominent in contributing to rural poverty.

Corruption:

Corruption is perceived as a significant issue across all regions, with the Northern region reporting the highest percentage (80%) in this category. This indicates that corruption diverts resources from

rural development, resulting in inadequate infrastructure and limited access, which is a severe concern in this zone.

The Southern, Western, and Eastern regions also acknowledge the prevalence of corruption but at relatively lower percentages (20-35%).

Political Marginalization:

The Northern region again stands out with the highest percentage (70%) for political marginalization. Rural areas in this zone are perceived as frequently marginalized in political decision-making, leading to underinvestment in essential services.

The other regions also report political marginalization but to varying degrees (25-30%).

Inadequate Access to Credit:

Inadequate access to credit is recognized as a challenge in all regions, with varying percentages. The Northern region has a higher percentage (60%) of respondents perceiving this issue, which limits entrepreneurship and income-generating activities.

The Southern, Western, and Eastern regions also acknowledge this concern but at relatively lower percentages (30-40%).

These findings highlight the nuanced and context-specific nature of rural poverty and its contributing factors across different regions of Nigeria. While some themes, such as gender disparities and corruption, appear to have a significant impact across the board, others, like traditional land tenure, vary in importance depending on the region. Policymakers and development organizations can use these insights to tailor interventions and strategies to address specific challenges in each zone effectively.

4.1. Findings

Gender Disparities:

Northern Nigeria reports the highest perceived impact of gender disparities (65%). Traditional gender roles in this region significantly limit women's access to education and economic opportunities.

Southern Nigeria exhibits a relatively lower impact (35%) in this category, indicating comparatively better gender equity in access to education and economic opportunities.

Religious Practices:

Eastern Nigeria stands out with the highest perceived impact (60%) of religious practices on rural poverty. Certain religious beliefs in this zone are seen as discouraging formal education and economic activities, negatively affecting rural livelihoods.

Southern Nigeria also reports a notable impact (55%), signifying the substantial influence of religious practices on rural poverty in this region.

Traditional Land Tenure:

Northern Nigeria reports the highest perceived impact (75%) related to traditional land tenure issues. Land disputes and inequitable land distribution systems are considered prevalent, hindering agricultural productivity.

The Southern region, however, has a relatively lower impact (25%), suggesting that traditional land tenure issues may be less prominent contributors to rural poverty.

Corruption:

Corruption is perceived as a significant issue across all regions. Northern Nigeria reports the highest perceived impact (80%), highlighting the diversion of resources from rural development and

resulting in inadequate infrastructure and limited access, a severe concern in this zone.

The Southern, Western, and Eastern regions also acknowledge the prevalence of corruption but at relatively lower perceived impact percentages (20-35%).

Political Marginalization:

The Northern region stands out with the highest perceived impact (70%) of political marginalization. Rural areas in this zone are perceived as frequently marginalized in political decision-making, leading to underinvestment in essential services.

The other regions also report political marginalization but to varying degrees (25-30%).

Inadequate Access to Credit:

Inadequate access to credit is recognized as a challenge in all regions. Northern Nigeria reports the highest perceived impact (60%), limiting entrepreneurship and income-generating activities.

Regional Disparities: The research revealed notable regional disparities in rural poverty. While the Southern Region generally exhibited higher mean incomes and a higher percentage of households with incomes "More than 1,000,000 Naira," the Northern Region had a higher percentage of households with incomes "Less than 500,000 Naira." These disparities highlight the need for region-specific poverty alleviation strategies.

The Southern, Western, and Eastern regions also acknowledge this concern but at relatively lower perceived impact percentages (30-40%).

These findings underscore the importance of considering each region's unique cultural, social, and economic dynamics when addressing rural poverty in Nigeria. Tailored interventions that address region-specific challenges related to gender disparities, religious practices, land tenure, corruption, political marginalization, and access to credit can contribute to more effective poverty reduction efforts.

4.2. Discussion of Findings:

The findings of this research provide valuable insights into the complex landscape of rural poverty in Nigeria, emphasizing the cultural bases and the influence of access and power dynamics across four distinct regions: Northern Nigeria, Southern Nigeria, Western Nigeria, and Eastern Nigeria. These findings not only highlight the multifaceted nature of rural poverty but also underscore the need for region-specific interventions and policy considerations to effectively address this pressing issue.

Gender Disparities: The research reveals significant gender disparities that impact rural poverty differently across regions. In Northern Nigeria, traditional gender roles and unequal property rights contribute to women's limited access to education and economic opportunities. These disparities are consistent with earlier studies (Eboh & Egbon, 2019). In contrast, Southern Nigeria exhibits relatively better gender equity, suggesting the influence of regional culture and development (Kabeer, 2005).

Religious Practices: The role of religious practices in rural poverty is substantial, with Eastern Nigeria perceiving the highest impact. This aligns with studies emphasizing the influence of religious doctrines on education and economic activities (Ogunrinola, 2017). The coexistence of positive social cohesion and inhibiting beliefs underscores the nuanced nature of religion's impact on rural livelihoods (Weber, 1905).

Traditional Land Tenure: Traditional land tenure systems significantly affect agricultural productivity and rural poverty. Northern Nigeria reports the highest impact, reflecting the prevalence of land disputes and inequitable land distribution (Salisu & Yaaba, 2020). Secure land tenure is crucial for economic opportunities (Deininger, 2003).

Corruption: Corruption emerges as a pervasive issue contributing to rural poverty across regions. The high impact of corruption in Northern Nigeria underscores the urgent need for anti-corruption measures (Uchendu, 2019). Corruption diverts resources away from rural development projects, limiting access to essential services (Mauro, 1995).

Political Marginalization: Political marginalization is a common challenge across regions, with Northern Nigeria facing the highest impact. The underinvestment in rural areas due to a lack of political representation perpetuates poverty (Ajiboye et al., 2021). Addressing this issue requires inclusive governance structures (Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

Inadequate Access to Credit: Limited access to formal financial institutions hampers entrepreneurship and income-generating activities in all regions. The higher impact in Northern Nigeria emphasizes the urgent need for expanding access to credit (Adewole et al., 2020). Financial inclusion initiatives can promote economic development (Beck et al., 2007).

The findings collectively highlight the intricate interplay of cultural practices, access to resources, and power dynamics in rural poverty. Policymakers and development organizations must adopt region-specific strategies to address these challenges effectively. Empowering women, promoting equitable land distribution, combating corruption, enhancing political representation, and improving access to credit and education are vital steps toward alleviating rural poverty in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, rural poverty in Nigeria is a multifaceted challenge deeply rooted in cultural practices, power dynamics, and unequal access to resources. Our research, spanning diverse regions of the country, underscores the need for tailored interventions that account for the specific nuances of each area.

Gender disparities persist, with women in Northern Nigeria facing the greatest hurdles. Religious beliefs, while fostering social cohesion, can hinder economic progress. Traditional land tenure systems demand equitable reforms to unlock agricultural potential. Corruption diverts vital resources, perpetuating poverty, particularly in the North. Political marginalization further exacerbates rural underdevelopment, necessitating inclusive governance structures. Inadequate access to credit stifles entrepreneurship, urging financial inclusion initiatives.

Addressing rural poverty requires a region-specific approach that empowers women, promotes equitable land distribution, combats corruption, enhances political representation, and improves access to credit and education. By recognizing and acting upon these cultural bases and power dynamics, Nigeria can take significant strides toward sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation.

5.2. Recommendations:

1. **Empower Women:** Implement policies and programs aimed at empowering women in rural areas. This

includes initiatives to promote girls' education, provide vocational training, and create economic opportunities for women. Gender-sensitive policies should be adopted to address traditional gender roles and unequal property rights.

2. **Land Tenure Reforms:** Enact land tenure reforms that ensure equitable land distribution and provide secure land tenure for rural communities. This will boost agricultural productivity and stimulate economic growth in rural areas. Community-based land management systems should be considered to facilitate fair land access.
3. **Anti-Corruption Measures:** Implement robust anti-corruption measures at all levels of government. Strengthen institutions responsible for combating corruption and ensure transparency in resource allocation and project implementation. Citizens should be encouraged to report corruption without fear of reprisal.
4. **Political Inclusion:** Promote political inclusion of rural communities in decision-making processes. Ensure adequate representation of rural areas in governance structures and allocate resources fairly to address infrastructure and service gaps in these regions.
5. **Access to Credit:** Expand access to formal financial institutions and credit sources in rural areas. Establish microfinance programs and community-based credit initiatives to support entrepreneurship and income-generating activities. Financial literacy programs can help rural residents make informed financial decisions.
6. **Religious and Cultural Sensitivity:** Promote dialogue and engagement with religious and community leaders to address practices that hinder economic development while respecting cultural and religious diversity. Encourage the interpretation of religious texts that promote education and economic empowerment.
7. **Data Collection and Monitoring:** Enhance data collection and monitoring systems to track progress in poverty reduction efforts. Regular assessments should be conducted to evaluate the impact of interventions and make necessary adjustments.
8. **Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity building for local government officials and community leaders to improve governance and service delivery in rural areas. Strengthen the skills and knowledge of individuals responsible for implementing poverty reduction programs.
9. **Collaborative Efforts:** Foster collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international development partners to pool resources and expertise in addressing rural poverty. Joint initiatives can enhance the effectiveness of poverty reduction programs.
10. **Education and Awareness:** Raise awareness among rural communities about their rights and entitlements. Promote education and civic engagement to empower residents to actively participate in the development process.

When implemented comprehensively and sensitively to regional contexts, these recommendations can significantly reduce rural poverty in Nigeria and improve the overall well-being of its rural populations.

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