

The Dialectics of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria's South-East Region: A Dependency Approach

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable socio-economic development is feasible only on the basis of interdependent, positive and beneficial reactions between agriculture, industries, and trade. Where there are disarticulations between the trios, the economy in question remains shaky, and always dependent on sources outside its control for survival, which subjects it to external control. In the light of the above, socio-economic development in South-Eastern Nigeria has lately remained a contentious issue. This paper interrogates the dependency trends in South-Eastern Nigeria and how it impedes socio-economic development in the region. While relying heavily on secondary sources of data collections such as textbooks, journal papers et, cetera, the study utilizes the theory of Economic Structuralism to portray the dangers associated with dependency vis-à-vis socio-economic development in the South-East region of Nigeria. This paper posits that the South-Eastern economy is dependent in the areas of agriculture/food, trade, finance etc. and recommends inter-alia, the initiation of unified aggressive rural agricultural policies and programmes by the governments across South-Eastern States, which will ensure that everyone, irrespective of occupations engages in at least subsistence farming to boost food security and reduce importations of agricultural products in the region.

Keywords: Dependency, Socio-economic development, South-East, Poverty, Industrialisation.

INTRODUCTION

Attainment of sustainable socio-economic development has been the major desire and goal, if not the *raison d'être* of every government worldwide. However, No country of the world can claim to have attained its zenith with regards to socio-economic development, for development even in its comparative sense is a continuum. Nigeria is not left out in this global quest to achieve socio-economic development as every government in Nigeria (both military and democratically elected) have developed one programme or the other geared towards attainment of sustainable development. Socio-economic development however, is not achieved on a platter of gold. This is owing to the fact that different countries of the world face their peculiar challenges which hinder their developmental efforts. These peculiarities of developmental factors across the globe created room for global uneven development. This also affects developmental trends within Nations, communities, societies and tribes, as their socio-economic developments have remained obviously unequal. Some of these socio-economic developmental factors include but not limited to: capital formation, natural resources, agricultural power, conditions in foreign trade, economic system, human resources, technical know-how and general education, political freedom, social organisation, corruption, political will to develop, cultural impediments and insecurity. Nigeria's socio-economic development is greatly conditioned by the global price of crude oil which is almost always volatile. For instance, between year 2000 and 2014, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at an average rate of 7% per year; then following the decline in oil price between 2014-2016, coupled with negative production shocks, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate dropped to 2.7% in 2015 and 1.6% in 2016 leading the country into its

first recession in 25 years (World Bank, 2019). These developmental rates recently witnessed in Nigeria are too weak to be felt or to create a positive change in the lives of the population of the country. With the agricultural sector that remains so weak and crude, unemployment rate as at Q2 of 2020 jumped from 23% in 2018 to 27.1% showing that over 21.7million Nigerians remain unemployed (NBS,2020); while food inflation on the speedy increase. Despite some paper socio-economic progress recorded in Nigeria in recent years, the country is ranked 152 of 157 countries in the World Bank 2018 human capital index as her human capital development remains so weak owing to underinvestment (World Bank, 2018). Whenever the cases of poverty and unemployment are mentioned in Nigeria, the northern part of the country is almost always in sight as the capital of poverty and underdevelopment, despite the large population, large expanse of land suitable for agriculture, and other opportunities. This is as a result of the phenomenal high rate of poverty and unemployment sustained by uncontrollable population outburst without commensurate economic planning, which in turn gives rise to and perpetuates the boko haram insurgency, banditry, cattle rustling, kidnapping as well as the almighty ‘Almajiri’ syndrome. However, the phenomena of poverty and high rate of youth unemployment and their inevitable outcomes are no longer peculiar to the Northern Nigeria alone. The trend has gradually but successfully penetrated the Southern part of the country with the South-East as the worst hit and the most vulnerable. The South-Eastern Nigeria is becoming increasingly underdeveloped, matching up with the Northern region in high rate of poverty, youth unemployment, brain-drain, slow but steady rise in insecurity and the Almajiri-like phenomenon, less than what is obtainable in South-Western Nigeria. The seeming collapse of the Igbo apprenticeship system recently has left many youth with the option of embracing the hire-purchase system of motorcycle and tricycle transportation system as the easiest way of making a living and escaping poverty, which appears to be unsustainable at the long-run. One may spend the whole day with the thought of what a graduate of agriculture is doing with tricycle at Onitsha, what a graduate of engineering is doing with motorcycle in Ogbete Enugu state, why a graduate of industrial chemistry should be working as a sales girl in Ariaria market in Aba, and why a graduate of fishery and aquaculture should be working as a fuel dispenser in a filling station?. Following the ban on motorcycle and tricycle transportation system in some cities like Owerri, Awka, Onitsha, Asaba, Enugu and Aba, these youth in their thousands were left perambulating for there was no alternative structure developed to absorb them. Such a great number of army of unemployed youth in the South-Eastern Nigeria pose a great danger to the security and over all socio-economic development of the region and Nigeria at large. This paper therefore, interrogates the state, pattern and direction of dependency in South-East Nigeria and how it impacts her socio-economic development.

Statement of Problem

It is no longer news that the South-Eastern Nigeria is gradually moving into competition with the Northern region in who retains the title of the capital of poverty, underdevelopment, and insecurity in Nigeria. This becomes so undeniable and too conspicuous, following the recent report on poverty level in Nigeria released by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in which the South-Eastern states performed so badly and very far below expectations. According to the NBS, South-East harbours about 43% of citizens who are classified as very poor with a below per capita annual expenditure of about N137, 430 as the baseline for being described as poor (Ngwu, 2020). It is also pertinent to note that out of the ten states with the least poverty level according to NBS, only Anambra state out of other South-East states made it at 8th position. About 80% of Ebonyi state citizens are described as very poor being the worst in the South-East, followed by Enugu state with about 60% poverty level. Abia and Imo states are with about 31% and 29% respectively, while Anambra is at about 15% poverty level. With about N4trillion budgeted and spent in four years from 2015-2019, across these five South- Eastern states, it leaves one with imaginations and shock about the kind of political economy of retrogression instituted, that has successfully taken the region about twenty years backwards within the short space of five years.

Hypotheses

The study hypothesises that:

- The economy of the South-Eastern Nigeria is dependent on federal government allocations, other regions' economies as well as some foreign economies such as the Asians for survival.
- The dependence nature of the South-Eastern Nigeria's economy is responsible for her incapability of auto-centric sustainable socio-economic development.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Dependency Theory

The dependency theory remains one of the greatest instruments within the disposal of Latin American as well as African Neo-Marxist scholars, with which they have objectively refuted the tenets of the pro-capitalist modernisation theory, and further explained the reasons behind the continued underdevelopment status of the so-called Third world countries. The concept of dependency as first coined by a Brazilian sociologist, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was used to link those who are beneficiaries of development with those who make the decision (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2003:179). The Dependents viewed the over persistently growing underdevelopment in the Third world countries as a function of the parasitic relationship between them and the developed countries, occasioned by the aggressive integration of the Third World economies into the global capitalist system. Some of the exponents of this theory such as Cardoso, Dos Santos (1971), Rodney (1972), Ake (1982) etc. do not differ in their definition of dependency. While Dale L. Johnson in Obi (2005:27) views dependency as imperialism seen from the perspective of underdevelopment, Dos Santos sees dependency as "a situation in which a certain group of countries have their economies conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subject. According to Dos Santos: ...the relation of interdependence between two or more economies and world trade assume the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant) can expand and give impulse to their own development while other countries (the dependent) can only develop as a reflection of this expansion (Dos Santos, 1971). In line with the above, Rodney (1972) laments that the integration of the Third World economies into the western capitalist system which results in dependency, is the greatest impediment to development in these countries. Mbah and Obiora (2015) rightly view dependency as an explanation of the economic development of a state in terms of the external influences- political, economic and cultural- on national development policies. Acknowledging the relationship between dependency and underdevelopment, Ake (1982:55) opines that "an economy is dependent to the extent that its position and relations to other economies in the international system and the articulation of its internal structure make it incapable of auto centric development". Ake went further to note that dependency as it concerns the Third World countries and the West manifested in forms of: aid dependence, trade dependence, technological dependence, dependence of the monetary system, and financial dependence. An economy therefore, is termed dependent 'when the direction of its movement (both locally and in the international space) is directly or indirectly conditioned or determined by forces (whether local or international) greater than it. The above definition leads us to what we may call forms of dependency, which are: international dependency and intranational dependency. Smith (2003) identified international dependency as the form that exist between one country and another e.g between one developed capitalist economy and a Third World country or between one developed capitalist economy and another. Intranational dependency on the other hand is a form of dependency that exist within a country (especially in federal states) in which a unit's economy is parasitically attached to another for sustainability. Finding a lasting panacea to the burdensome over international and intranational dependency of the Third World countries, Smith (2003:86) opined that "the local manufacture of formerly imported goods would reduce dependency on the highly volatile markets

for primary products”.

Socio-Economic Development

Development remains a contentious concept within the field of social sciences and humanities. The divergent nature, stages and rate of development across the globe makes it incapable of precision in its conceptualisation. Despite the difficulties posed by the divergent views as a result of its divergent nature, and the disagreement amongst the proponents of the theory of socio-economic development, we can easily for the purpose of this study, group them into:

- Materialist theorists of socio-economic development and
- Humanitarian theorists of socio-economic development.

The materialist theorists of development represented by W.W. Rostow(1960), E.E. Hagen(1968), David McClelland(1971) and E. M. Rogers(1974) etc. equate socio-economic development with the increase in income per capita of a society. To them, development is exclusively an economic phenomenon only measurable with the tool of econometrics. Development in this perspective is the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at rates perhaps 5% to 7% or more (Todaro and Smith, 2003). These scholars understand development to mean the same thing as growth. The materialistic have been criticised for their mindless pursuit of socio-economic development through an increase in the income per capita without a thought on how the benefits of growths are distributed in the society, what Celso Furtado termed “growth without development” (Obi and Nwanegbo, 2006:4). On the other hand, the Humanitarian theorists of socio-economic development are represented by Seers (1969), Rodney (1972), Sen (2001), etc. In addressing the shortcomings of the materialistic theorists of development, the humanitarians are mostly concerned with how to reduce suffering and improve the living conditions of people rather than placing premium on the statistical growth of the national economy that has little or no direct consequences on the standard of living of the people. Hence, Dudley Seers avers that: ...The questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? ... (Seers, 1969). According to Seers, if the above three pointers of development remain on the negative side, even if per capita income doubled, the result cannot be called development. Sen (2001) opines that development entails “freedom, liberty, and self-esteem of humanity”. These three items identified by Sen Amartya are what put an individual on the right track towards the attainment of his full potentials. In his acknowledgement to the fact that socio-economic development should start first with the welfare of the people and gradually reflect on the environment in terms of infrastructures, Walter Rodney views development as the manifestation of increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. He went further to state that: A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organised (Rodney, 1972:9-10).

Socio-Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria

The South-Eastern region of Nigeria is made up of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states which harbour the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. The South-Easterners ab initio were said to be the most industrious, innovative, competitive, and highly enterprising as could vividly be seen in their 1967-1970 civil war and post-civil war economies. The speed with which the Igbos recovered economically from the scourging effects of the civil war and overtook other regions in the areas of socio-economic development remains amazing to many till date (Olutayo, 1999). However, the past three decades witnessed the unfortunate death-

by-instalment of this once celebrated speedy socio-economic developmental trend of the South-Eastern Nigeria (Ikerionwu, 2013). Umezina (2016) rightly observes that a visit to any of the South-Eastern states of Nigeria, one is most likely to be confronted with signs of affluence and poverty. Affluence in the sense that many towns and villages are beautified with magnificent structures in terms of houses, hotels, malls, plazas, market structures and gigantic filling stations. According to Umezina: ...the roads leading to these places do not square favourably with the buildings. They are dilapidated, rough and full of potholes...many of their occupants are Wallowing in abject poverty. Some find it difficult to pay the school fees of their Children and wards, have three square meals a day or pay for their hospital Bills... (Umezina, 2016: 112). While Umezina attributes this state of socio-economic decadence in South-East to failure of the government in the region to invest sufficient amount of money on infrastructures, including the health sector, Olarinde, Abass, Abdoulaye, Adepoju, Fanifosi, Adio, Adeniyi, and Wasiu (2020:7) view the increasing poverty level in South-East as a function of relative deprivation. Agbaeze and Nwankwo (2013) noticed that the contribution of these South-East states to national growth and productivity, mostly in the area of agriculture is fast declining and results in poor agricultural supplies from this zone as well as poor availability and high cost of food items in the urban areas of the region. Lamenting over the dilapidating socio-economic standards of the South-Eastern states, Agbaeze and Nwankwo (2013:88) blame the socio-economic decadence and poor living standard on the ignorance and neglect of this zone by the public and private sectors of the nation's economy through deprival of meaningful development, as well as the inability of the South-Eastern states to completely harness the great potentials of their environments in the areas of agriculture and industry. However, from the above listed possible harbingers to socio-economic decline in South-East, little or no attention whatsoever was paid to the over dependent nature of the post-civil war South-Eastern states of Nigeria and its possibility of igniting and fuelling the conspicuous, slow but steady decline in the socio-economic standard of the region. It is on this premise that this study interrogates the dependent nature of South-Eastern states as the possible bane for socio-economic development in the region.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the theory of Economic Structuralism. Structuralism is one of the development theories which emphasises the structural aspects that impede the socio-economic development of the third world countries. The theory of structuralism is deeply rooted in the economic tradition of South Americans and specifically Chile. In 1950, Raul Prebisch while in Chile, serving as the first director of the Economic Commission for Latin America, with the cooperation of Dudley Seers, Osvaldo Sunkel, Anibal Pinto, and Celso Furtado propounded the theory of structuralism. The unit of analysis of the structuralists remains the overall transformation of a country's economy from mainly subsistence agriculture to a modern, urbanised manufacturing and service economy (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/development-theory>). They are more interested in the structural transformation (by the government) of the developing countries which they argued would create an economy which enjoys self-sustaining growth. According to structuralisms, a nation can only develop meaningfully when the government initiates actions that will push industrialisation, reduce dependency on foreign trade and encourage the production of domestic substitutes of formerly imported industrial products. By the above, the third world countries will no longer depend on exports of primary goods. Structuralism, for the purpose of this study, emphasises the need for the government of the South-Eastern Nigeria to deliberately and dutifully initiate actions that will give rise to inward-oriented development. The incessant importation of almost every needed finished products and the exportation of only primary products (agricultural and mining products) will perpetuate structural economic volatility and dependency in the region. The theory advocates massive industrialisation in the South-East region if they must escape from the current socio-economic decadence ravaging the region.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION/ANALYSIS

For its nature, this study relies strongly on the secondary method of data collections which includes sources like books, journals, online publications, magazines, newspapers, unpublished materials, etc. The study also adopts Textual analysis as the suitable method of data analysis. The choice of this method was informed by

the usefulness of the textual analysis in examining trends and patterns in data obtainable from both unpublished and running documents.

DISCUSSION

Dependency and South-Eastern Nigeria

There is no gainsaying that no community is an Ireland unto itself as none can survive alone without interacting with others. However, this relationship should be by all standard consensual, symbiotic and above all, interdependence. The case of South-Eastern Nigeria today is that of over dependence on other regions in Nigeria and overseas rather than interdependence. According to Ake (1982), when a country's position and relations to other economies in both national and international system and the articulation of its internal structures make it incapable of auto centric development, such economy is suffering from dependency syndrome. The above being the case of the South-Eastern Nigeria, manifested in forms of: agricultural/food dependence, trade dependence, technological/industrial dependence as well as financial dependence.

Agricultural/Food Dependence in South-Eastern Nigeria

Agriculture remains the foundation of every economy and for any economy to flourish, agriculture must succeed. Lin (2018) rightly observes that "agricultural modernisation prepares conditions for industrialization by boosting labour productivity, increasing agricultural surplus to accumulate capital, increasing foreign exchange via exports, increasing incomes and productivity of poor farmers, lowering food prices and improving nutrition". Prior to the oil boom era in Nigeria, agriculture accounted for more than 90% of the common wealth and resources of Nigeria. Unfortunately, in less than 50 years after independence and crude oil discovery in Nigeria, agriculture has been relegated to the background, while food and other agricultural products' importation became the order of the day. Among all the zones in Nigeria, South-East is worse off in the issues of agricultural cum food dependency. The major occupation of the South-Easterners prior to the oil boom era in Nigeria was agriculture. Everybody was identified and titles were given according to what forms of agriculture one engaged in. every family in Igbo land practised traditional integrated farming system in which they fed their local livestock (cattle, fowls, goats, sheep, etc.) with forages and grains directly from their farms while manures from their livestock were used to prepare the soil for their crops. In fact, anybody that did not own a farm land and/or livestock was labelled lazy, persona non grata and must not be allowed in any community/social gathering (Achebe, 2006). Having other occupations like white collar jobs were never excuses for not having a farm land and/or livestock farms in Igbo land. The above tradition ensured food security, increased household income, reduced unemployment among youths, and reduced crime rates in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Figure 1: Showing the Moribund Yam Ban System in South- Eastern Nigeria.



Source: www.nairaland.com.

Although this agricultural practice was not mechanised, the zone interdependently enjoyed exchange of agricultural outputs in abundance without barriers. Weather condition was favourable for the cultivation of varieties of crops, thus; ...the climate of the area is that of the tropical rainforest, which encourages the cultivation of food crops like yam, cassava, vegetables, rice, etc. and Livestock production (Onyeneke, Igberi and Aligbe 2018). The yam ban system was the most effective and sustainable method of yam preservation as well as a measure of the agricultural strength of every family in Igbo land. As the population of the South-Easterners increased, there was need for the transformation, expansion and mechanisation of this agricultural practice, if not for foreign earnings, at least for domestic food security. Unfortunately today, this practice is near comatose to the extent that without the Northern and South-Western parts of the country, South-East would altogether be in food crises. In her studies, using four agrarian local governments (Anambra East, Ogbaru in Anambra and Oguta, Ohaji/Egbema in Imo) in South- Eastern Nigeria as case study, Akukwe (2020) rightly observes that despite the prevalence of smaller household sizes, the zone is battling increasing rate of food insecurity.

Table 1: Household Food Security Status Using Per Capita Monthly Food Expenditure.

Community Food Security Status Total

	FOOD SECURE	FOOD INSECURE	
Atani	27 (42.2%)	37 (57.8%)	64 (100.0%)
Ossomala	21 (32.8%)	43 (67.2%)	64 (100.0%)
Otuocha	21 (47.7%)	23 (52.3%)	44 (100.0%)
Igbariam	17 (39.5%)	26 (60.5%)	43 (100.0%)
Oguta	28 (68.3%)	13 (31.7%)	41 (100.0%)
Ezi-Orsu	21 (52.5%)	19 (47.5%)	40 (100.0%)
Mmahu	25 (48.1%)	27 (51.9%)	52 (100.0%)
Opuoma	26 (50.0%)	26 (50.0%)	52 (100.0%)
Total	186(46.5%)	214(53.5%)	400(100.0%)

Source: Akukwe (2020)

From the table above, one could draw inference on the level of food insecurity in South-East, for instance in Anambra state where Atani, Ossomala, Otuocha, Igbariam, etc; that are regarded as the food basket of the state are 58%-67% food insecure. To worsen the situation, farm lands in these areas are continually and massively being sold off to estate developers for hotels, hostels, filling stations, airports, shopping mall constructions as well as other non-economic-sustainable beautiful edifices. What then happened to the then Igbo types of tomatoes, pepper, beans, melon and pineapple planted in the region abinitio? What happened to the Igbo sweet yam and three-leave yam (ona) that has almost gone extinct today? What happened to the Igbo cattle specie (efi Igbo), goat rearing system, and poultry birds that were more organic and healthier? What is happening to Igbo palm fruits and palm oil? All these have been abandoned for whatever that come from the North and South-West irrespective of whether they are organically produced or not. The conspiracy theory that some of these food items do not grow well in the South-East has been debunked by series of experimental researches. It has been observed that the Northern region of the country has remained a major source of food supply to the Southern part of the country; in fact, about 90% of food items consumed in the South-East states come from the North (Eme, Onyishi, Uche and Uche, 2014). The general insecurity and the volatile nature of the Northern Nigeria which the South-East depends on for food supplies explain clearly, the reasons for the level of scarcity, panic-buying, uncertainties and instabilities in prices of food items as well as relative high cost of living in South-East Nigeria.

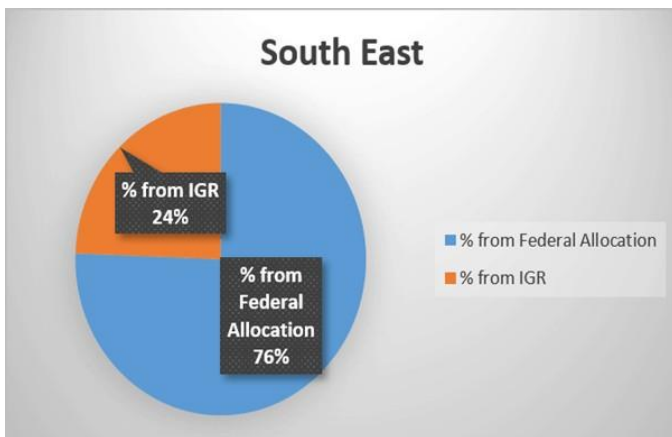
Trade, Technological/Industrial Dependence in South-Eastern Nigeria

Sustainable socio-economic development is feasible only on the basis of interdependent, positive, and beneficial reactions between agriculture, industries and trade. Where there is disarticulation between the trios, such economy remains shaky, and suffers dependency syndromes. The people of South-Eastern Nigeria have been involved in trade for as long as there are any records (Northrup, 2009). The Igbos traded such items as gold, salt, cowry shells, weapons, expensive cloths, pepper, ivory, kola nut, leather goods, as well as other agricultural products (Ariyo, 2014). The above substantiate the fact that the pre-colonial Igbo economy flourished on the foundations of agriculture, trade, and manufactures. The three reacted beneficially with each other such that agricultural products as well as discovered natural resources were utilized locally to manufacture goods which were traded locally and internationally. For instance, the discovery of iron ore in Awka, salt in Ubulu and Okposi, and lead in Abakaliki encouraged mineral exploitation and the growth of crafts and manufactures such as the famous blacksmithing forges in Awka (Anene, 1979). The Igbo industrialization became heavier and conspicuous during the Nigeria/Biafra war (1967 -1970), when the defunct Biafran government constituted some of its best scientists and technicians into the Research and Production Board (Madiebo, 1980). Ikerionwu rightly puts that: ...working with local resources and content, they delved into virtually all areas of production, from the building of refineries to the production of home grown wine. The local arms industry developed by RAP was specifically for the situation and was unsophisticated compared to contemporary standards. Nevertheless, the Biafra hand-made grenades, ogbunigwe (Igbo name for bomb), rockets and guns kept Biafra steady long after they lost access to official external sources (Ikerionwu, 2013:244). The industrialization process continued in the post-civil war Igbo as Olutayo (1999) agrees that “with little or no government assistance, the Igbos have moved from trade to industry since the end of the civil war”. One could count numbers of industries that existed which engaged in manufacturing such as Cutix plc and Adswitch plc that manufactured electric cables and switchgear, JohnWhite fan belts, Uru brake cables, Edison brake pads, OCE oil filters, Godwin-Kris rubber auto-parts, Coscharis group, Niger auto parts, ANAMCO etc. However, not quite too long after the end of the civil war, there occurred a severe distortion to this flourishing Igbo industrialization process. Ikerionwu (2013) observes that between the end of the civil war and the contemporary period, the Igbos have experienced tremendous change, although this change has been negative and rooted in the region’s loss of socio-economic foundation laid before the war. The travelling nature of Igbo merchants as well as unfavourable government policies was instrumental to the collapse of the Igbo industrialization. By the year 1999, Asian tigers (China, South-Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, etc.) had gained a strong foothold in the contemporary Igbo economy. This integration of Igbo contemporary economy into the Asian and other foreign economies pushed the South- East economy backwards into trade, industrial/technological dependence. All hitherto locally produced goods in South-East are now imported from China and other Asian countries. With the flooding of Igbo markets with cheap but substandard electronic goods, clothing, vehicle spare parts etc., many local manufacturers that could not compete favourably with the imported products had to down tools and lock up their industries. Citing the case of ANAMCO, the then only vehicle assembling plant in the whole of South- East and how it collapsed, Ikerionwu, noted thus: ...as a result of managerial hiccups, patronage has faded away and customers have decided to buy directly from countries like Brazil, China instead of ANAMCO. Therefore, this company is no longer in business (Ikerionwu, 2013: 247). Suffice it to say that today, all the major markets in the South-East, including the largest market in West Africa (Onitsha main market) and Ariaria international market in Aba Abia state, are 90% dependent on external sources outside the region most especially abroad for their survival. For instance, goods as common as baby toys, match sticks, cotton buds, toothpick etc. are imported across South-East markets. Nnewi auto parts market now depends on China, Taiwan, Japan etc. for auto parts while food markets across the region depend on the Northern region of Nigeria for the supply of food materials.

South-Eastern Nigeria and Financial Dependency

This is one of the most crucial forms of dependence of the South-East economy. This form of dependence manifests in two ways: dependence on federal allocations and dependence on foreign loans/aids. Omogui-Okauru raised alarm concerning the high dependency ratio on the federal allocations by most states and local governments and pointed out that: Until a state or local government can achieve a positive balance between internally generated revenue (IGR) and federal allocation, it will remain over dependent on a source of revenue which is outside its control and subject to external control (Vanguard, 2010).

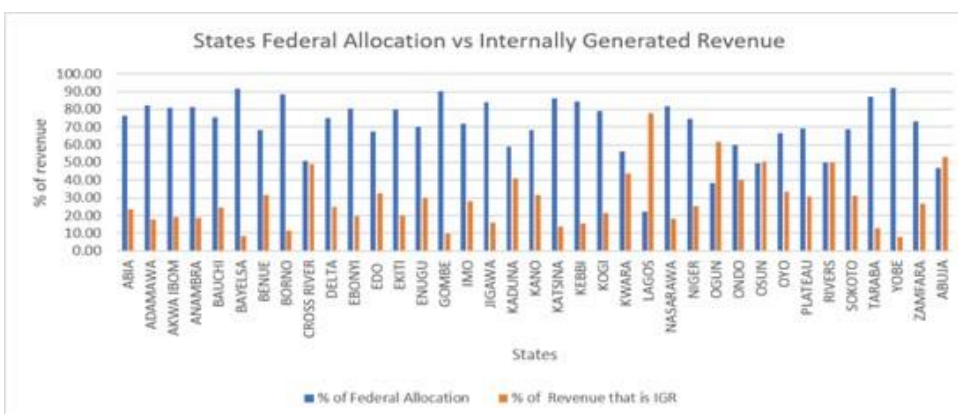
Chart 1: showing the Revenue Profile of South-East Nigeria in the Year 2019.



Source: Databod.com. (2020)

According to the study carried out by Databod on the revenue profile of Nigerian states, South-East among other regions, ranked as the second most dependent region on federal allocation. From the chart above, about 76% of the total revenue of the South-Eastern states in the year 2019 came from the federation allocation accounts while only 24% came from Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). Chart 2 below shows the individual states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and their level of dependence on federal allocations as well as the percentage of their internally generated revenues (IGR) in the year 2019.

Chart 2: States Federal Allocations versus Internally Generated Revenues.



Source: Databod.com. (2020)

With the mono-economic nature, federal governments’ over reliance on oil revenue and the global collapse of oil price, the federal allocations to states have been severely affected. The over dependence on federal allocations and the poor Internally Generated Revenues (IGR) base of the South-Eastern states of Nigeria, result in paucity of revenues to fund budgets as well as dependence on local and foreign loans, aids and

grants. Chart 3 below shows Anambra and Enugu states listed among top ten (10) states with highest external debt profile in Nigeria.

Chart 3: Top 10 States With Highest External Debt Profile.

S/N	State	₦ External Debt (Naira)
1	LAGOS	N1,426,428,935.47
2	EDO	N276,253,922.96
3	KADUNA	N227,252,685.58
4	CROSS RIVER	N188,773,736.81
5	BAUCHI	N133,930,757.08
6	ENUGU	N126,177,662.23
7	ANAMBRA	N107,041,487.48
8	EKITI	N106,208,598.19
9	OYO	N104,997,383.47
10	OGUN	N103,256,042.18

Source: NBS, Proshare

Table 2: Poverty Level in South-Eastern Nigerian in the Year 2020.

S/N	STATES IN SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIA	POVERTY LEVEL (%)
1	EBONYI STATE	80%
2	ENUGU STATE	60%
3	ABIA	31%
4	IMO STATE	29%
5	ANAMBRA STATE	15%

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2020.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above data on the level of dependency in South-Eastern Nigeria explains clearly why poverty, unemployment, brain-drain, infrastructural decadence, as well as illiteracy are on the increase in the region. It is no longer news that there is rapid socio-economic decline in South-Eastern Nigeria, as the region is gradually catching up with the Northern Nigeria in the poverty, unemployment, insecurity and illiteracy. The recent data released by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2020 shows that about 43% of the South-Easterners were classified as poor with a below per capita annual expenditure of about N137,430(Ngwu, 2020). The NBS went further to break it down that 80% of Ebonyi state citizens are poor, which is the worst in the region, followed by Enugu state with about 60%, Abia state 31%, Imo state 29% while Anambra is at about 15% (NBS,2020). This level of poverty could be attributed to the high rate of unemployment in the region. Omogui-okauru observes that in most of the South-Eastern states, there are several moribund industries and organisations which could have created employments for teaming unemployed youths who will in turn pay taxes, which will increase the IGR (Vanguard, 2010). The seeming gradual cum silent collapse of the Igbo traditional apprenticeship system (ITAS) which helped in absorbing the army of unemployed youths in the region (Osita, Chukwuemeka-Onuzulike and Ojimba, 2020), also contributed to this recent high rate of youth unemployment in the South-East region. This trend of high rate of youth unemployment brings about cases of insecurity such as high rate of kidnapping in the region and encourages the youth to resort to the most recent phenomenon of land grabbing. The president of Ohaneze Ndigbo in Anambra state, Chief Damian Okeke-Ogene identified land grabbing as one of the major causes of intra and inter-communal crisis, which if left unchecked would have socio-economic consequences on Igbo land in the

nearest future (<https://nnn.ng/communal-crisis-igbo-leader-warns-youths-against-land-grabbing>). Food insecurity and brain-drain have remained on the increase in the region as well as child labour, street hawking and begging, out of school children, and the phenomenal increased number of children looting the streets during school hours picking aluminium waste materials which they sell to earn a living. Internet frauds as well as other get-rich-quick ventures flourish in the region as young graduates and even undergraduates resort to all that for their economic survival (www.africanliberty.com). All these disarticulations and unfortunate situations happen because the economy of the region suffers dependency syndrome which in the words of Claude Ake, is the greatest impediment to the socio-economic development of the South- Eastern Nigeria.

On this note, the study recommends the following:

- Unified aggressive rural agricultural policies and programmes should be initiated across the South-Eastern states, which will ensure that everyone engages in at least subsistence farming to boost food security in the region and reduce importations.
- Governments should initiate actions that will push industrialization in South-East and reduce dependency on foreign trade as well as encourage the production of domestic substitutes of formerly imported goods. This can easily be achieved by first ensuring that agriculture reacts beneficially with local industries.
- Vocational education and technical skill acquisitions should be made available and affordable to all, and if possible be made mandatory at every level of education. This will ensure that education in South-East suffers no disarticulations with the Societal needs.
- States in South-Eastern Nigeria should fashion out strategies to expand growth and earning potentials to ensure optimal Internally Generated Revenues (IGR), which in turn would reduce financial dependence and improve on the socio-economic development of the region.

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