

# Relationship between Social Policies and the Wellbeing of the Society

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**Abstract:** This research examined the relationship between social policies and the wellbeing of the society in Nasarawa State Public Service. Both primary and secondary source of data and information were used for the study and questionnaire was used to extract information from the purposively selected respondents. The population for this study is two hundred and ninety six (296) respondents from Nasarawa State Public Service. The statistical tools employed were the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients ( $r$ ) to examine all the hypotheses of the study. Also, descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages was used to present descriptive attributes of the respondents to the study. The result of the study indicates that a positive or direct relationship between wellbeing of society (WELS) and policy on equal opportunity for all (PEQO) in the study area. A negative or an inverse relationship exists between wellbeing of society (WELS) and social policy on security (SPOS) in randomly selected Nasarawa State Public Servants. There is a direct relationship between wellbeing of society (WELS) and Social policies on poverty reduction (SPPR) in randomly selected Nasarawa State Public Servants. A negative or an inverse relationship exists between wellbeing of society (WELS) and policy on economic growth (POEG) in randomly selected Nasarawa State Public Servants. The result of the study indicates that the strength of the relationship is  $-0.208^{**}$  or  $-20.8\%$  and the relationship is statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). It was concluded that the central goal of the economic policies of welfare states has traditionally been to maintain economic growth in order to ensure the materialistic well-being of citizens. It was recommended among others that poverty reduction should be the paramount goal of the government of Nasarawa State. This can be done by the provision of jobs and skill acquisition centres in the state for the teaming army of unemployed people

**Keywords:** Policies, Social, Wellbeing, Society, Nasarawa, Government.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### *Background to the Study*

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have become proxy indicators for social progress and national well-being grounded on the assumption that a growing economy will inevitably lead to societal advancement. However, there have long been doubts about the suitability of measuring a complex concept such as well-being with one economic indicator and subordinating 'the social' under 'the economic'. The many problems with this include, for example, that economic growth is partly based on the depletion of natural resources

and contributes to environmental pollution thus undermining the sustainability of social and economic progress or that, as a measure of aggregate wealth, GDP does not tell us anything about the distribution of this wealth within society, or indeed the social inequalities and lived experiences of most people. These are very relevant criticisms since unequal distributions of material resources are found to be connected to important social outcomes such as poor health or high crime rates, while hurting the economy and growth rates in turn. Developments in this field matter from a welfare and social policy perspective because key well-being outcomes and welfare policies are closely linked. The media in the UK often portrays social security benefits and welfare state interventions more generally in a bad light (for example, when talking about a 'dependency culture').

However, evidence emerging from cross-national research shows that more encompassing welfare states, aiming for more social and gender equality, almost always perform better across a range of well-being measures; including objective measures such as physical and mental health, educational attainment, social mobility and social connectivity, crime and imprisonment rates (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010), but also the self-reported measures of health, happiness and life-satisfaction (Deeming and Hayes, 2012). In summary, a well-funded and functioning welfare state, based on solidaristic principles, can play a critical role in securing societal well-being as a whole, from which everyone benefits.

The welfare state not only impacts directly on citizen's well-being through the provision of personal services and family benefits, but also more indirectly through improving the health, wealth and social well-being of a whole nation. According to Baldock *et al.* (2003), the welfare state through its comprehensive health, education, pensions, and care services plays a key role in securing economic growth. It provides the infrastructure to support and develop 'human capital' in the form of a healthy workforce equipped with the necessary skills demanded in the modern knowledge economy, and all of society benefits by enabling people of working age to fully participate in the labour market through the provision of care services for children and older people. In its broadest sense, the idea of 'welfare' refers to 'well-being', or what is 'good' for people.

Understood more narrowly, it can be taken to refer to the provision of social services -principally healthcare, housing, social security, education and social work. The connection between the two uses rests in the role of social services as 'the provision of welfare'. Part of the purpose of social services is, ideally, altruistic - 'doing good' to people. There are curative approaches: people who have something wrong with them receive 'treatment' to put it right. Social services can be developmental: a society in which individuals are valued should have the facilities to help them realize their potential. And social services may protect people; the 'safety net' which the services provide help to remove the uncertainty associated with need, a protection against for example the problems of old age, disability or poverty. The problem statement of this study examines the following major issues

1. The provision of welfare of the people are inadequate that majority of the people all over the world are not given proper care
2. The poverty rate is high, people are poor and they cannot meet the standard of living
3. In most cases people are denied of justice, prevention of justice seen at every level
4. The issue of insecurity everywhere, where people and properties are destroyed.

#### *Objective*

The main objective of the study is relationship between social policies and the wellbeing of the society. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To ascertain the relationship between equal opportunity for all and wellbeing of society
2. To examine the relationship between policy on security and wellbeing of society
3. To determine the relationship between poverty reduction policies and wellbeing of society
4. To ascertain the relationship between policy on economic growth and wellbeing of society.

#### *Hypotheses of the Study*

H<sub>01</sub>: Policy on equal opportunity for all has no significant relationship with wellbeing of society

H<sub>02</sub>: Social Policies on security has no significant relationship with wellbeing of society

H<sub>03</sub>: Social policies on poverty reduction has no significant relationship with wellbeing of society

H<sub>04</sub>: Policy on economic growth has no significant relationship with wellbeing of society.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Conceptual Framework*

Social policies can be seen as collective responses to social problems. A problem is social when it is socially recognized:

important issues like grief and emotional distress are not necessarily 'social', and there may be no social policies to deal with them. Conversely, other, seemingly minor, concerns and complaints can be elevated to the status of social problems, and acted on - dealing with 'NIMBY' protests ('not in my back yard') bedevils community care provision. Social policy draws on sociology to explain the social context of welfare provision. If we are trying to improve people's welfare, it is helpful to try to understand something about the way that people are, and how welfare policies relate to their situation. Some writers have gone further, arguing that because welfare takes place in a social context, it can only be understood in that context. This has been particularly important for 'critical social policy', which begins from a view of social policy as underpinned by social inequality - particularly the inequalities of class, race and gender. Societies are 'structured' in the sense that people's relationships follow consistent patterns. Fiona Williams has argued that social policy is dominated in practice by the dominant values of society - the issues of family, work and nation. *Family* A range of policies are built around the idea of the 'family' as a man, woman and children.

The earliest example of direct intervention by government in human welfare dates back to Umar ibn al-Khattāb's rule as the second caliph of Islam in the 6th century. He used zakat collections and also other governmental resources to establish pensions, income support, child benefits, and various stipends for people of the non-Muslim community. In the West, proponents of scientific social planning such as the sociologist Auguste Comte, and social researchers, such as Charles Booth, contributed to the emergence of social policy in the first industrialized countries following the industrial revolution. Surveys of poverty exposing the brutal conditions in the urban slum conurbations of Victorian Britain supplied the pressure leading to changes such as the decline and abolition of the poor law system and Liberal welfare reforms. Other significant examples in the development of social policy are the Bismarckian welfare state in 19th century Germany, social security policies in the United States introduced under the rubric of the New Deal between 1933 and 1935, and the National Health Service Act 1946 in Britain.

Social policy aims to improve people's well-being, and is especially concerned with the welfare of those who experience some form of disadvantage. This book is about social policy in Australia: its purpose and meaning, how it operates now, how it has operated in the past, and the social policy challenges for the future. We show how social policy has affected the lives and choices of Australians over time. We cover how social policy is made, so readers can understand the policy process and become informed and skilled policy activists in their attempts to improve social conditions. In this first chapter the idea and scope of social policy is explored: why it is important, what it means, where it is made and how it relates to other policy areas and to broader

institutional arrangements, often referred to as the welfare state.

Many welfare systems have their origins in collective and mutualist actions by trades unions, professional or occupational groups, rather than the state. Trades unions developed, for example, unemployment benefits in Denmark, social housing in Norway, or the health service in Israel. In France, social protection for unemployment is administered by a "convention" of employers and trades unions.

Social policy has at least three different meanings. The first is social policy as an output; that is, a policy or set of policies, the arrangements and organization to achieve the policy, and the impact of the policy. Second is social policy as a discipline or field of study (Alcock 1998) and third is social policy as a process for action to improve societal welfare. Social policy is more planned than random—it involves some kind of purposeful, intentional activity and often ‘authoritative choice’ (Althaus *et al.* 2007, p. 6). For example, the decision to introduce reform of family law and no-fault divorce in the early 1970s was not accidental. It arose from purposeful action to change laws seen to be out of step with changing values and the changed reality of marriage and separation. Social policy is concerned about the welfare (or well-being) of individuals and groups in society. This book takes a broad definition of the meaning of welfare as explained further below.

Social policy is concerned with both overall welfare and also about how welfare or well-being is distributed among different groups according to important facets of life, such as health, education, income and employment. It is also true that welfare developed historically at a time of social conflict, and labour organizations have had an important role in the development of policy, including Bismarck's establishment of social insurance and the foundations of the British social services. Marxists have traditionally seen the welfare state as the outcome of struggles by the labour movement. This is only true in part: several measures - like insurance-based pensions in the UK - have developed despite the resistance of organized labour, and others, like the extension of rights to the poorest, have been marked by conflicts between groups. Problems are 'socially constructed'. People's values, beliefs and opinions are conditioned by the society they live in, and people come to share many basic perceptions. This can shape the way people think about issues, and close off some options: so, child abuse is usually constructed as the result of parental abnormality, and not as the obvious outcome of rules which allow children to be beaten physically.

The Big Society has emerged as one of the most prominent and indeed contentious concepts of the Coalition Government. For some, the concept presents a real opportunity to nurture greater personal and civic responsibility, giving individuals the autonomy to solve the issues that affect their communities. For others, the concept is merely a distraction from the

billions of pounds worth of cuts that will be made to the public sector and a way of ‘rolling back the State’. Debates will continue about the underlying ideological principles of the Big Society; however it is clear that the Coalition Government is committed to the concept and this commitment will have a significant effect on voluntary and community sector organizations in particular. Whilst it pre-dates the current government, the well-being agenda has gained support from the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. This support was illustrated by David Cameron's announcement of the National Well-being Project in late November 2010 and the intention to measure the nation's well-being through a household survey administered by ONS which is currently open to public consultation.

There is a convincing argument to be made that activities to support well-being will be important if individuals are to have the capacity to participate in the Big Society. As such, there is potential for a mutually reinforcing relationship between the Big Society and well-being. In the final part of this Local Work, we set out some key considerations that may help voluntary and community sector organizations in particular to make the link between Big Society and well-being. As ring-fenced budgets disappear, voluntary and community sector organizations will have to demonstrate their impacts in terms of broader outcomes, such as the well-being of beneficiaries and the wider community. The Big Society agenda also emphasizes the importance of corporate social responsibility and corporate social activism, indeed it is the Coalition Government's intention that this will compensate for the shortfall in public sector funding that voluntary and community sector organizations are due to receive. Should this movement in policy prove successful in instigating a new climate of philanthropy, there may be opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to enhance their relationship with the private sector and benefit from a wider range of funding streams. Moreover, effective collaborations between the two sectors have the potential to raise the capacity of voluntary and community sector organizations, for example through mentoring or staff secondments. For private sector partners, joining forces with the voluntary and community sector to promote volunteering, for example, has the potential to enhance employees' well-being and morale.

#### *Empirical Review*

If we understand social policy as output, we see social policy as some kind of product, which according to Baldock *et al.* (2003) may have different forms. It can be: social policy as intentions and objectives (Baldock *et al.* 2003, p. 8), meaning social policy as clarifying and debating what we want to achieve. This can be in the form of policy statements or informal agreements. Various examples are provided below. Social policy as administrative and financial arrangements, meaning the way we organize our services and institutions to achieve these intentions and objectives; for example, the

organization of our health and housing systems and of our welfare state overall. Social policies can vary in detail and formality. They can be formal statements with substantial detail about purpose and proposed action, a set of related formal statements, statements of general intention or purpose, and statements where values are articulated or informal agreements of intent that are not necessarily made explicit.

Working Nation is an example of social policy as a formal statement with substantial detail. Prime Minister Keating released it in 1994 after a significant policy review about the problem of unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, which followed the very severe recession of the early 1990s in Australia. Working Nation (Keating 1994) contained a range of detailed proposals related to reducing unemployment and long-term unemployment. They covered: industrial relations changes, such as the introduction of a training wage and new labour-market programs such as case management, job subsidies to employers to take on long-term unemployed people, and a large job creation program the introduction of a Job Compact with the promise of a job or training for long-term unemployed people over eighteen months some actions to promote regional development changes to the operation of income support, including the introduction of reciprocal obligation, which required the unemployed person to take up the opportunities under Working Nation or face some penalty (see Edwards 2001; Keating 1994; Watson 2002).

Policy is frequently represented as a set of policy statements rather than being encapsulated in one statement alone. This particularly applies to broad policy areas such as aged care policy, employment policy and so on. It can also apply to a policy issue where there is a series of related changes taking place in a number of different areas. For example, the policy issue of work and family is affected by a number of policy statements, including statements from the previous Industrial Relations Commission about the leave entitlements and working conditions that apply to parents in paid work; the operation of the Paid Parental Leave Scheme, details of which are available from the Commonwealth Department of Human Services; and statements related to the expectations of work by parents who receive welfare payments.

These functions of the welfare state are the principal mechanisms by which the advanced economies help their citizens collectively to guard against adverse social risks, such as unemployment and poverty, but also social investment in the early years, in education and training for work (i.e., active labour market policy) that not only helps to secure greater levels of equality in society but also fosters human capital for future generations (Deeming and Smyth, 2014; Kvist, 2014).

### III. METHODOLOGY

This research employed descriptive research design. The study used primary from the sampled population and

secondary sources like textbooks, journals, internet resources. For the primary sources of data collection, views of randomly selected Nasarawa State public servants who make up the population for the study.

The population for this study is two hundred and ninety six (296) respondents from the study area. The study employed convenient sampling, a non-probability sampling method to select two hundred and ninety six (296) respondents of Nasarawa State public Servants who make up the population for the study. The research instrument is a five - point scale type of questionnaire which captured four questions for each of the objectives. The statistical tools employed were the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients ( $r$ ) to examine all the hypotheses of the study. Also, descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages was used to present descriptive attributes of the respondents to the study as shown in section 4.0.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the result of the study based on the specific objective earlier stated. The following are the acronyms used for the variables of the specific objectives of the study. WELS = wellbeing of society, PEQO= Policy on equal opportunity for all, SPOS = Social Policy on Security, SPPR = Social policies on poverty reduction and POEG = Policy on economic growth.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the study

|      | Mean    | Std. Deviation | N  |
|------|---------|----------------|----|
| WELS | 15.5000 | 12.23670       | 20 |
| PEQO | 15.6000 | 11.61850       | 20 |
| SPOS | 18.7500 | 13.19440       | 20 |
| SPPR | 11.6500 | 9.24107        | 20 |
| POEG | 16.5000 | 8.90594        | 20 |

Source: Author's Computation, 2018

As shown from the result of the descriptive statistics above, wellbeing of society (WELS) has a mean of 15.5000, with a standard deviation of 12.23670. Policy on equal opportunity for all has a Mean of 15.6000 with a standard deviation from the mean of 11.61850. Social Policy on Security has a Mean of 18.7500 with a standard deviation of 13.19440. Social policies on poverty reduction has a Mean of 11.6500 with a standard deviation from the Mean of 9.24107. Policy on economic growth has a Mean of 16.5000 with a standard deviation of 8.90594. These statistics shows the character of the data under study and it gives an idea of the distribution of the data around the sample mean of the study. As shown from the statistics, the variability in the data set is not wide as the deviation of the data from the Mean position is not wide. Wider deviation gives an idea of the volatility of the data.



Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients

|      |                     | Correlations |       |       |       |       |
|------|---------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|      |                     | WELS         | PEQO  | SPOS  | SPPR  | POEG  |
| WELS | Pearson Correlation | 1            | .110  | -.148 | .119  | -.208 |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     |              | .046  | .535  | .018  | .030  |
|      | N                   | 20           | 20    | 20    | 20    | 20    |
| PEQO | Pearson Correlation | .110         | 1     | .156  | -.199 | .110  |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .046         |       | .513  | .400  | .045  |
|      | N                   | 20           | 20    | 20    | 20    | 20    |
| SPOS | Pearson Correlation | -.148        | .156  | 1     | -.371 | -.206 |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .535         | .513  |       | .107  | .384  |
|      | N                   | 20           | 20    | 20    | 20    | 20    |
| SPPR | Pearson Correlation | .119         | -.199 | -.371 | 1     | -.145 |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .018         | .400  | .107  |       | .541  |
|      | N                   | 20           | 20    | 20    | 20    | 20    |
| POEG | Pearson Correlation | -.208        | .110  | -.206 | -.145 | 1     |
|      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .030         | .045  | .384  | .541  |       |
|      | N                   | 20           | 20    | 20    | 20    | 20    |

Source: Author's Computation, 2018

*a) Ascertain the relationship between equal opportunity for all and wellbeing of society*

A positive or direct relationship between wellbeing of society (WELS) and policy on equal opportunity for all (PEQO) in the study area. A positive value of  $r$  indicates that as one variable increases, the other variable increases. The result of the study indicates that the strength of the relationship is  $0.110^{**}$  or 11.0% and the relationship is statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). On the basis of  $p$ -value of the estimate, we reject the null hypothesis; that is, we accept that Policy on equal opportunity for all has significant relationship with wellbeing of society in the study area. This is in line with the study carried out by Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010 and Deeming and Hayes, 2012. Their study indicates that evidence emerging from cross-national research shows that more encompassing welfare states, aiming for more social and gender equality, almost always perform better across a range of well-being measures; including objective measures such as physical and mental health, educational attainment, social mobility and social connectivity, crime and imprisonment rates, but also the self-reported measures of health, happiness and life-satisfaction. In summary, a well-funded and functioning welfare state, based on solidaristic principles, can play a critical role in securing societal well-being as a whole, from which everyone benefits. This result thus provides the nexus between the our study on the relationship between policy on equal opportunity and societal wellbeing.

*b) Examine the relationship between social policy on security and wellbeing of society*

A negative or an inverse relationship exists between wellbeing of society (WELS) and social policy on security (SPOS) in randomly selected Nasarawa State Public Servants. The result of the study indicates that the strength of the relationship is  $-0.148^{**}$  or -14.8% and the relationship is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.01$ ). On the basis of  $p$ -value of the estimate, we accept the null hypothesis; that is, we accept that the estimate SPOS is not statistically significant at 5% level of significance. This means that Social Policies on security has no significant relationship with wellbeing of society. This is in line with the findings of Deeming and Haye (2012) who found that unequal distributions of material resources are found to be connected to important social outcomes such as poor health or high crime rates, while hurting the economy and growth rates in turn. Developments in this field matter from a welfare and social policy perspective because key well-being outcomes and welfare policies are closely linked.

*c) Determine the relationship between Social Policy on poverty reduction and wellbeing of society.*

There is a direct relationship between wellbeing of society (WELS) and Social policies on poverty reduction (SPPR) in randomly selected Nasarawa State Public Servants. This means that as, social policy on poverty reduction (SPPR) increases by a unit, the wellbeing of society (WELS) in selected Nasarawa State Civil Servants increases by 11.9%. On the basis of  $p$ -value of the estimate, we reject the null hypothesis; that is, we accept that Social policies on poverty reduction has significant relationship with wellbeing of society. This finding is in line with that of Deeming and Smyth, 2014; Kvist, 2014 who stated that the functions of the welfare state are not only limited to the principal mechanisms by which the advanced economies help their citizens collectively to guard against adverse social risks, such as unemployment and poverty, but also social investment in the early years, in education and training for work (i.e., active labour market policy) that not only helps to secure greater levels of equality in society but also fosters human capital for future generations

*d) Ascertain the relationship between policy on economic growth and wellbeing of society*

A negative or an inverse relationship exists between wellbeing of society (WELS) and **policy** on economic growth (POEG) in randomly selected Nasarawa State Public Servants. The result of the study indicates that the strength of the relationship is  $-0.208^{**}$  or -20.8% and the relationship is statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). On the basis of  $p$ -value of the estimate, we reject the null hypothesis; that is, we accept that the estimate POEG is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. This means that Policy on economic growth has a significant relationship with wellbeing of society.

This finding is contrary to that of Baldock *et al.* (2003), whose research findings indicates a direct relationship by stating that the policies of the welfare state through its comprehensive health, education, pensions, and care services plays a key role in securing economic growth. It provides the infrastructure to support and develop 'human capital' in the form of a healthy workforce equipped with the necessary skills demanded in the modern knowledge economy, and all of society benefits by enabling people of working age to fully participate in the labour market through the provision of care services for children and older people.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship of social policies and the wellbeing of the society. According to the literature reviewed, social policy is an academic discipline focusing on the systematic evaluation of societies' responses to social need. It was established in the early-to-mid part of the 20th century as a complement to social work studies. The central goal of the economic policies of welfare states has traditionally been to maintain economic growth in order to ensure the materialistic well-being of citizens. The result of this study has shown us that we should seriously think about how best we can generate well-being without economic growth as it was inversely related to societal wellbeing. This is because it is possible that our economy will not, despite all our efforts, grow much in the coming decades.

The study has shown that economic structures and established operating models have become under pressure in all developed Western countries and worst in the developing country such as Nigeria. Fundamental changes are therefore needed, and adapting to these will also have an impact on work life. Industrial production is moving to cheaper countries, and the work previously carried out by the middle classes is increasingly being replaced by computers and digitalized services. Future economies may not offer as many jobs to people as before. Well-being is one of the most important aspects of people's lives both as individuals and as societies. That is why it has become imperative that sound policies from government should be put in place to strengthen the institutions that is saddled in ensuring the wellbeing of the society.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION

1. The government of Nasarawa State should enact policy that will ensure equal opportunities for all the citizens of the state. Every government need to create an avenue that will make provision of welfare and wellbeing of her citizens a priority.
2. It is recommended that it is only the creation of social security that will ensure the wellbeing of the citizen as government can collaborate with other agencies to create acquisition centre to acquire skills that will help to reduce the level of crime.

3. Poverty reduction should be the paramount goal of the government of Nasarawa State. This can be done by the provision of jobs and skill acquisition centres in the state for the teaming army of unemployed people.
4. Government should stop its policy and policy reversal as it has a deleterious effect on economic growth. A sound policy on comprehensive health, education, pensions, and care services plays a key role in securing economic growth.

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