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Comparing the Apples and Oranges in Nigeria’s Poverty Measurements

Elections will soon be over and the winner will sit to consider the important tasks ahead; no doubt, that of poverty alleviation will be a top priority. The reality is that many Nigerians are poor and the winner has to do something about it, quickly.

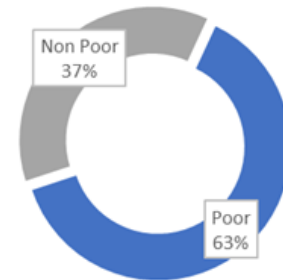
According to the multidimensional poverty statistics released in 2022, 63% of Nigerians are poor, comprising 72% and 42% of rural and urban dwellers respectively. This rate of poverty also varies markedly among states ranging from 27% in Ondo state to 91% in Sokoto state. In total, about 133 million Nigerians are poor. This figure is very large and cannot be overlooked by any good leader.

Prior to the release of the multidimensional poverty in 2022, a monetary approach was used to measure Nigeria’s poverty rate in 2019; and it was recorded that 40.1% of Nigerians, about 83 million, were poor. The figures stood at 52.1% for rural and 18% for urban areas; ranging between 4.5% in Lagos state and 87.73% in Sokoto state.¹

As argued by the country’s statistical authority, the two approaches were not measuring the same thing, but could be seen to complement each other in providing different and robust perspectives to understanding Nigerian poverty dynamics.² This argument definitely has its merits, as different measures of poverty can deepen our understanding and hence how best to address poverty.

What is worrisome however is that variations in the way poverty is measured comes at a huge cost to policymakers and researchers. The major cost is the inability to compare figures over time, making it difficult to objectively gauge if an administration has actually made progress in its poverty alleviation efforts. This is further complicated as official poverty numbers are neither released frequently, say, annual, nor published at regular intervals. Often they are complemented by estimates from international institutions such as the World Bank defining as poor those living on less than \$2.15 a day, for instance.

This problem is not just between the 2019 monetary and 2022 multidimensional approaches; it has always been there. For instance, in 2009/2010, the NBS revised its methodology for measuring poverty to an absolute approach to allow for easy compa-



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rability with other countries. Prior to this period, the agency was using a relative approach which defined the poor as those with per capita expenditure less than two-thirds of the poverty line. Applying the absolute approach at a poverty line of N55,235.20 per person per year in 2009/2010, Nigerian poverty stood at 62.6%.

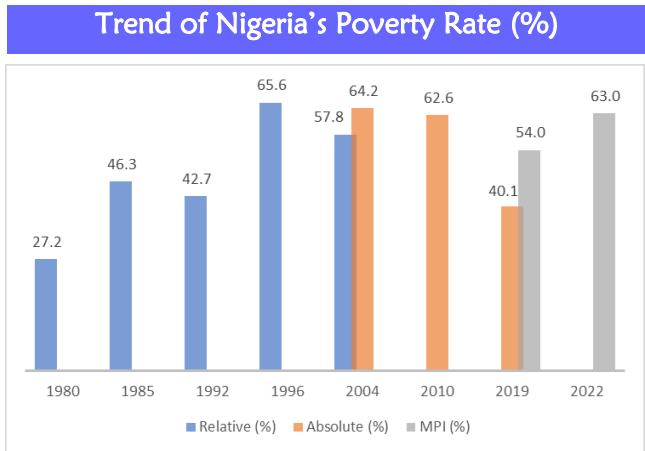
Conversely, when the absolute poverty method was applied to 2003/2004, which earlier had a relative poverty rate of 57.8%, Nigeria’s poverty rate showed a higher value of 64.2% at a poverty line of N28,836.70.³ The foregoing shows that Nigerian poverty numbers can be highly dependent on the chosen methodology; underscoring the need to exercise caution in their interpretation and usage. In fact, the NBS once warned:

*“Given that NLSS 2018-19 is not technically comparable to either the NLSS 2003-04 and to HNLSS 2009-10, it is not possible to compare poverty levels between 2003-04, 2009-10 and 2018-19. In order to compare poverty rates across time, the underlying data should be collected in a similar method ... 2019 study is accordingly treated as a base study and any comparisons with previous poverty studies should be treated with caution”.*⁴

Therefore, based on available official statistics, it will be difficult to evaluate the extent to which the current and outgoing administration has been able to reduce poverty in Nigeria. The last official poverty number before this administration was 62.6% in 2010. Although poverty fell to 40.1% in 2019, two factors make it difficult to know what actually happened. First, between 2010 and 2015, it was unclear how much poverty was reduced before the current administration came to power. Second, the NBS already stated that poverty numbers before 2019 were not quite comparable to that of 2019.

In the alternative, one may consider the multidimensional poverty conducted using 2018 data which showed a 54% poverty rate. With this, it can be concluded that poverty has increased given that 63% were poor in 2022. But there is another challenge; while the 2018 Nigeria’s MPI was based on 11 indicators, that of 2022 was based on 15 indicators. Hence, the need to isolate these differences in methods and their impacts on the results.

This point is very relevant for the incoming administration. What poverty rate will it inherit and what rate will it leave behind? It should not be possible to claim leaving behind a lower poverty rate when such reduction may arise from a mere methodological change. While Nigeria needs to design and implement appropriate policies to address its high poverty rate, it should also be possible to measure poverty in a comparable manner to identify if any appreciable progress has been made by a particular administration.



Source: NBS, ADSR Research



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With the evidence of structural breaks in the data and such warnings, Nigeria needs to look for a consistent way to measure its poverty. This is critical so that policymakers can be held accountable on their promises and be discouraged from manipulating poverty statistics just by effecting a methodology change in poverty computation.

Why is this very important?

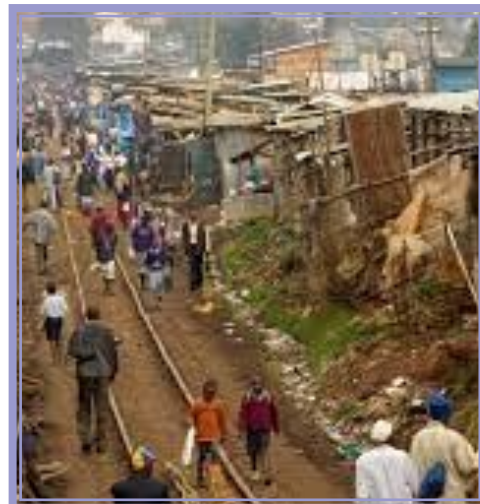
Many of the country's plan and policies are directed at solving its poverty problem. Since the return to democracy, Nigeria has implemented a number of programmes, starting from the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) introduced in 2000 to address the problems of rising unemployment and crime wave, particularly among youths. In 2001, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was introduced for the eradication of absolute poverty in Nigeria. Other recent poverty-related programmes include job creation and youth employment (N-Power), Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF), Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), and Government Enterprise and Empowerment programmes (GEEP).

The NDP's (2021-2025) objective of lifting 35 million citizens out of poverty by 2025 speaks to the President's promise in June, 2019 of lifting 100 million Nigerian out of poverty in 10 years. The Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) in 2021 also developed the National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy (NPRGS) as a document to help in achieving the President's aspiration of drastic poverty reduction. Appendix A also highlights the poverty reduction and welfare focus of some of Nigeria's development plans, policies and strategies.

If 100 million citizens will be lifted out of poverty in 10 years and poverty rate is expected to decline to 34% by 2025 and further to less than 3% by 2030, poverty rate needs to be tightly defined and consistently measured. Otherwise, an administration may be over- or under-rated based on mere statistical change that do not reflect in the lives of the citizens.

Therefore, the objective of alleviating poverty is critical to Nigeria. It can also be argued that the objective of using relevant methodology in line with current realities and global best practices is critical to the country's statistical authority. However, the country needs to strike a balance between these two objectives to make poverty numbers useful to policymakers in a sustainable manner. If the poverty status of the country is evaluated only at a single point in time, methodological changes may not be much of an issue, but if the numbers are expected to be compared over time to monitor progress, such changes will amount to comparing apples and oranges.

In sum, adequate poverty estimates are important as they provide a clear understanding of the extent and distribution of poverty within the country. This information is necessary for the design and implementation of effective poverty reduction policies and programmes. Furthermore, having accurate poverty estimates is important for monitoring progress over time and evaluating the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts. This allows policymakers to make data-driven decisions and adjust policies as necessary to achieve better outcomes.



... an administration may be over- or under-rated based on mere statistical change that do not reflect in the lives of the citizens.

The following are some recommendations that may help address the current challenge:

- **The policymaker should encourage and fund the production of poverty figures that are based on consistent and comparable methodology.** Citizens should also be engaged to track the progress made by government using these numbers in a transparent and consistent manner. The policymaker also needs to task the statistical authority to produce more relevant statistics to aid planning. This definitely implies that the National Bureau of Statistics and other data collection departments and units within government are to be adequately funded.
- **While the statistical authority should continue to use best methods to capture important statistics such as poverty rates, it should ensure that their comparability over time and usefulness in monitoring progress are given adequate attention.** For situations necessitating a change in approach, the new method should also be applied to previous data to facilitate comparisons. Consequent upon that, proper disclosure should be made with clear implications for interpretations. For example, it would be expected that a monetary approach was also applied to the 2022 data to allow for comparability with the 2019 figures.
- **Citizens should avoid getting carried away by mere statistics, but to ask questions on the method used and progress made over the last period,** while probing if there are methodology changes that may not allow for such comparability, along with their implications. The Organised Private Sectors (OPS) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) need to further interrogate poverty numbers beyond their face values and cascade them to the public.
- **Researchers need to probe into the existing measures of poverty and test alternatives for the purpose of robustness.** There are many research in this area which need to be shared with the statistical authority. Researchers should also be conscious of the structural breaks in poverty data while estimating their models and apply analytical methods that can address such breaks, otherwise they will be comparing apples and oranges.
- **Solving Nigerian poverty problems is far beyond the Federal Government as poverty rates vary widely across the states of the country.** Thus, State governments need to further focus, define, measure and address poverty in their localities.
- **International organisations' support on data collection should equally capture local needs.** When international organisations offer support to Nigerian agencies in data collection for their own needs, say, for SDG, they should ensure that such support also covers the collection of data that meets the need of local policymakers.



... accurate estimation of poverty rate is crucial for designing and implementing effective poverty reduction policies and programmes.

¹ On the one hand, the 2019 monetary poverty was an absolute poverty approach which established the official poverty line at N137,430 per person per year, being the monetary value of food and non-food expenditures needed for an individual to achieve a basic level of welfare. The poor were therefore defined as those who subsisted below this poverty line. On the other hand, the Nigeria's 2022 multidimensional poverty used a set of 15 indicators organized under four dimensions of education, health, living standards and works and shocks. The poor were defined as those that suffered deprivations in more than one of these dimensions.

² NBS (2022). Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty index. National Bureau of Statistics, Abuja, Nigeria.

³ NBS (2010). National Poverty Rates for Nigeria: 2003-04 (Revised) and 2009-10. National Bureau of Statistics, Abuja, Nigeria.

⁴ NBS (2019). Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria (May 2019) National Bureau of Statistics, Abuja, Nigeria.

Appendix A

Highlighted below are the poverty reduction and welfare focus of some of Nigeria's development plans, policies and strategies.

1. **National Development Plan (1962 – 1968):** To increase the level of living condition of the people by not only increasing real income but also providing more employment opportunities and better living conditions.
2. **Second National Development Plan (1970-1974):** To put premium on reducing inequalities in inter-personal incomes and promoting balanced development among the various communities in the different geographical areas in the country.
3. **Third National Development Plan (1975 - 1980):** To spread the benefits of economic development so that the average Nigerian would experience a marked improvement in his standard of living.
4. **Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985):** To increase the real income of the average citizen; more even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups; reduction in the level of unemployment and under-employment.
5. **Vision 2010:** To make Nigeria attain a controlled and manageable urban growth, and an improved urban economy to support poverty alleviation and create employment.
6. **NEEDS (2004):** To lay a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction by reducing the incidence of poverty to 5%.
7. **7 Points Agenda (2007):** To substantially reduce the number of people living below poverty line and income inequality.
8. **Vision 20: 2020:** To achieve a significant reduction in the incidence of poverty so as to achieve the MDG of halving poverty by 2015 and 75% by 2020.
9. **Transformation Agenda (2011):** To reduce the high incidence of poverty, high rate of unemployment and high level of insecurity.
10. **2017 Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2017):** To reduce poverty rate from 61% to 50-55% by 2020.
11. **National Development Plan (2021-2025):** To lift 35 million people out of poverty and create 21 million full-time jobs thereby reducing poverty rate from 40% to 34% by 2025.



Capital Market

Despite the global and domestic economic conditions, the Nigerian stock market pulled a strong performance in the first month of the year, January 2023. The market ended January with an equity capitalization of N29 trillion as against N27.92 trillion at the end of December 2022. The M-o-M comparison shows that market capitalization increased by 3.88 percent and rose to 15.42 percent Y-o-Y. Similarly, the All-Share Index increased from 51,251.06 index points to 53,238.67 points by the end of January, gaining 1,987.61 basis points. This represents an increase of 3.88% and 14.19% M-o-M and Y-o-Y respectively.

The total number of deals in the equities segment of the market also increased from 64,671 to 90,741 between December 2022 and January 2023. This shows an increase of 40.31% M-o-M and an increase of 2.57% over the number of deals traded in the corresponding month of the previous year. However, the market turnover increased to N88.87 billion in the month under review from N70.51 billion recorded in the previous month, representing an increase of 26.05%, M-o-M but a decline of 48.24% Y-o-Y.

The FMDQ Bond index shows a decline of 2.33%, M-o-M from 614.73 in December to 600.40 in January. However, when compared to the same month in the previous year, the index has gained 2.67% Y-o-Y. In the unlisted security market, the Unlisted Securities Index (NASD) increased by 0.14% M-o-M as the index rose from 708.40 in December to 709.39 in January. Year-on-year performance declined by 4.66%.

The market capitalization also increased to N932.15 billion in the reporting month from N929.25 billion in the previous month, representing an increase of 0.31% M-o-M and an increase of 47.95% Y-o-Y. However, the number of deals for the unlisted securities market increased by 62.44% and 118.99% on M-o-M and Y-o-Y basis respectively. Also, the total value traded in the unlisted market increased from 357.36 million in December to N370.35 million in January.

Capital Market				
Variable	Dec., 2022	Jan., 2023	M-o-M Δ (%)	Y-o-Y Δ (%)
All share index	51,251.06	53,238.67	3.88	14.19
Market capitalisation (N'bn)	27,915.07	28,997.67	3.88	15.42
Number of deals	64,671	90,741	40.31	2.57
Market turnover (N'bn)	70.51	88.87	26.05	-48.24
<u>FMDQ Bond index</u>	614.73	600.40	-2.33	2.67
Unlisted Securities Market				
Unlisted Securities Index (NASD)	708.40	709.39	0.14	-4.66
Market capitalization (N'bn)	929.25	932.15	0.31	47.95
Number of deals	213.00	346.00	62.44	118.99
Total value traded (N'mn)	357.36	370.35	3.63	-91.66

Source: NGX, FMDQ, NASD, ADSR Research

...market turnover increased to N88.87 billion in the month under review from N70.51 billion recorded in the previous month, representing an increase of 26.05%, M-o-M but a decline of 48.24% Y-o-Y.

Money Market

Money supply increased from N51.79 trillion to N52.14 trillion representing a M-o-M and Y-o-Y increase of 0.69% and 18.99% respectively despite the moves by the CBN to mop up liquidity from the economy. However, given the current situation of the money supply and currency in circulation, the CBN is likely to take appropriate measures where necessary to increase money supply in order to boost the availability of the redesigned naira notes nationwide.

On the other hand, net foreign asset trended downward from N5.60 trillion to N4.25 trillion, representing a decline of 24.11% M-o-M and 54.52% Y-o-Y. The drop in the net foreign asset could be as a result of higher foreign liabilities and lower inflows. A decline in net foreign assets often points to a potential foreign currency challenge as it could mean less foreign reserves or assets that is required to meet the liabilities of a country or future liabilities such as the ability to pay for imports. The net domestic asset increased from N64.22 trillion to N66.46 trillion during the period under review, implying an increase of 3.48% M-o-M and 36.97% Y-o-Y.

Credit to the government increased from N22.64 trillion to 24.66 trillion representing an increase of 8.91% and 85.01% compared with the previous month and same period last year respectively. Similarly, credit to the private sector increased from N41.58 trillion to N41.80 trillion representing an increase of 0.53%, M-o-M and 18.77% Y-o-Y. The continued growth in credit particularly to output enhancing sectors is expected to further support economic recovery; however, the rate of credit expansion to government far exceeds that of the private sector

The monetary policy committee of the Central Bank of Nigeria voted in its January 2023 meeting to raise its benchmark interest rate, the monetary policy rate, to 17.5% from 16.5% recorded at the last meeting in November 2022. The increase followed series of rate hikes in 2022. According to the MPC, the rate hike was necessary to tame inflation by reducing the money supply in the country and currency outside the vaults of the banks, which is believed to be fuelling the inflationary pressure. Interestingly, the increase in money supply has remained unabated, consistently trending upward since August 2022.

Money Market

Variable	Nov., 2022	Dec., 2022	M-o-M Δ (%)	Y-o-Y Δ (%)
Money supply (N'trn)	51.79	52.14	0.69	18.99
Net foreign asset (N'trn)	5.60	4.25	-24.11	-54.52
Net domestic asset (N'trn)	64.22	66.46	3.48	36.97
Credit to government (N'trn)	22.64	24.66	8.91	85.01
Credit to private sector (N'trn)	41.58	41.80	0.53	18.77
Monetary Policy rate (MPR) - %	16.5	17.5	1.00	6.00
PMI	54.3	54.6	0.30	7.70

Source: CBN, ADSR Research

...continued growth in credit particularly to output enhancing sectors is expected to further support economic recovery;

Foreign Exchange Market

Naira depreciated marginally against the United States dollar at the official market from N448.05/\$ as at the end of the previous month to N460.50/\$ in the month under review. The monthly comparison shows that the official exchange rate depreciated by 2.78% M-o-M and 11.16% Y-o-Y. In a similar vein, the currency depreciated further to N751/\$ at the parallel market, from the previous N737/\$. This shows a depreciation of 1.90% and 32.22% M-o-M and Y-o-Y, respectively. Nigeria is still facing massive currency volatility that has seen the exchange rate between the naira and dollar oscillate between gains and losses. Even so, the disparity between black market rates and the official exchange continues to widen.

The Nigeria Foreign Exchange Reserve was measured at \$37.00 billion down from \$37.08 billion in the previous month. A drop in external reserves poses a challenge to the ability of the central bank to maintain some of the gains recorded against the dollar on the black market. Lower external reserves increase the likelihood of the central bank considering a devaluation of the naira to stem the depletion.

Foreign Exchange Market				
Variable	Dec., 2022	Jan., 2023	M-o-M Δ (%)	Y-o-Y Δ (%)
Official Exchange Rate (N/\$)	448.05	460.50	2.78	11.16
Parallel Exchange Rate (N/\$)	737	751	1.90	32.22
External reserves (\$'bn)	37.08	37.00	-0.23	-7.60

Source: CBN, Nairametrics & ADSR Research

The price of crude oil (Brent) experienced an increase of 0.56% M-o-M as it moved from \$85.43/barrel to \$85.91/barrel.

Commodity Market

The AFEX commodity benchmark index, ACI, rose from 461.37 to 495.67 within the period under review. This accounts for an increase of 7.43% M-o-M and a decline of 1.96% when compared to the same period last year. The increase in the ACI signals a gain in the price performance of the commodities tracked by AFEX as well as a gain to investors in the commodity space.

Prices of energy commodities such as Diesel and Petrol showed an uptick from their prices in the previous month. For Diesel, the price rose by 1.11% and over 100% M-o-M and Y-o-Y respectively. However, the pump price of petrol increased from N202.48/litre last month to N206.19/litre in the month under review. This represents a M-o-M increase of 1.83% and 23.91% increase Y-o-Y.

The price of crude oil (Brent) experienced an increase of 0.56% M-o-M as it moved from \$85.43/barrel to \$85.91/barrel. The trend is still affected by the supply chain disruptions caused by the ongoing war in the Black Sea region. Price of natural gas increased from \$6.93/MMBtu to \$4.48/MMBtu declining by 35.35% M-o-M and 20.11% when compared with the same period last year. Crude oil production in Nigeria has increased marginally from 1.19mbpd to 1.24mbpd.

Furthermore, the prices of agricultural commodities such as corn and cocoa increased during the review period. Cocoa increased from \$2,498/MT to \$2600 while corn increased from 667 cent/bushel to 670.5 cent/bushel. This reflected a M-o-M increase of 4.08% and 0.52% for cocoa and corn respectively. On the other hand, the price of wheat and cotton dipped during the review period. Wheat declined from 795.5 cent/bushel to 792 cent/bushel while cotton declined from 84.61 cent/lb to 83.37 cent/lb. M-o-M comparison shows that wheat and cotton fell by 0.44% and 1.47% respectively.

Commodity Market				
Variable	Nov., 2022	Dec., 2022	M-o-M Δ (%)	Y-o-Y Δ (%)
AFEX Commodity Index	461.37	495.67	7.43	-1.96
Diesel (N/litre)	808.87	817.86	1.11	183.89
Petrol (N/litre)	202.48	206.19	1.83	23.91
Natural Gas (\$MMBtu)	6.93	4.48	-35.35	20.11
Gold (\$/toz)	1,768.52	1,824.02	3.14	-0.28
Cocoa (\$/MT)	2,498	2,600	4.08	3.17
Wheat (Cent/bu)	795.5	792	-0.44	2.76
Corn (Cent/bu)	667	670.5	0.52	13.02
Cotton (Cent/lb)	84.61	83.37	-1.47	-25.96
Crude Oil Price (Brent) (\$pb)	85.43	85.91	0.56	10.45
Average Nigerian Crude Oil Production (tb/d)	1,186	1,235	4.13	3.17

Source: Bloomberg, OPEC, AFEX & ADSR Research

Job Vacancies are Recovering to Pre-Covid Era

Nigeria’s labour market appears to be generating more jobs and expanding employment opportunities across sectors of the economy. The trend points to the fact that the economy and business environment is gradually recovering from the effect of Covid-19 pandemic and reversing to the pre-Covid era.

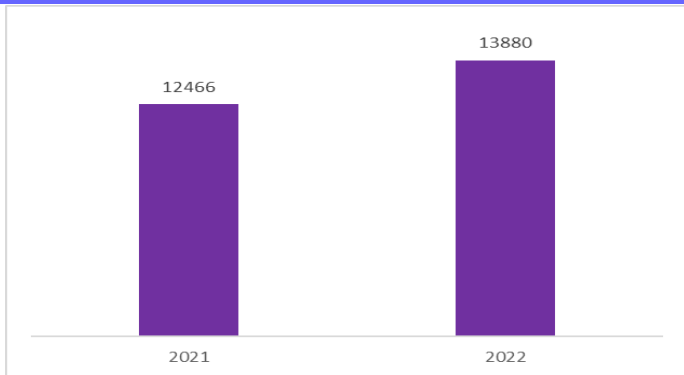
According to data tracking at ADSR, employment opportunities in terms of job vacancies advertisement increased by 11% from 12,466 in 2021 to 13,880 in 2022.

Administrative and support services sector topped the chart as the sector with the most job opportunities followed by human health and social services in the period under review. While administrative and support services, human health and social services, financial and insurance, professional, scientific and technical services, accommodation and food services as well as information and communication are the top six sectors with most jobs vacancies, the information and communication sector moved from the sixth position in 2021 to third position in 2022 pushing financial and insurance sector that previously occupied the position to fourth position. This movement is suggestive of the expanding opportunities in the country’s ICT sector.

Meanwhile, preliminary observations so far in 2023 is that job vacancies advertisements have declined over the figures recorded during the corresponding period of 2022. While it may be too early to judge, this trend may be connected with companies waiting for the outcome of the February, 2023 elections as well as the problems of fuel and cash shortages currently experienced by Nigerians.

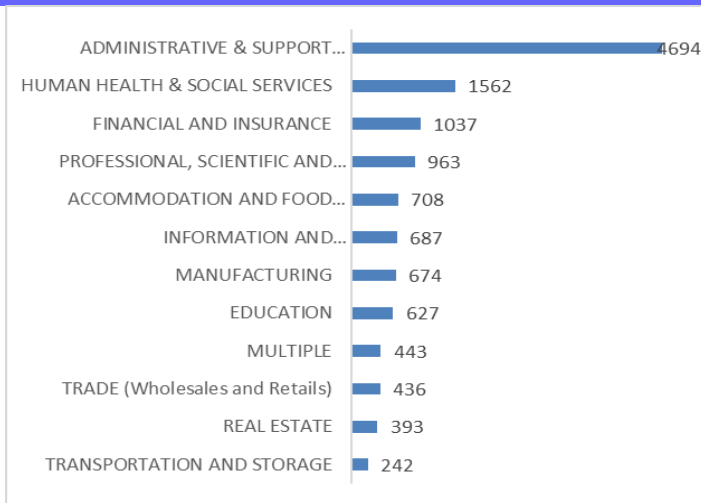
This notwithstanding, the general trend is that job vacancy advertisements are gradually recovering to their pre-pandemic era. What needs more empirical validation however is to investigate whether these emerging job opportunities are as a result of labour market expansion or due to the “japa” (labour migration and brain drain) syndrome which has hit Nigeria in recent times.

Job Vacancies—2021 and 2022



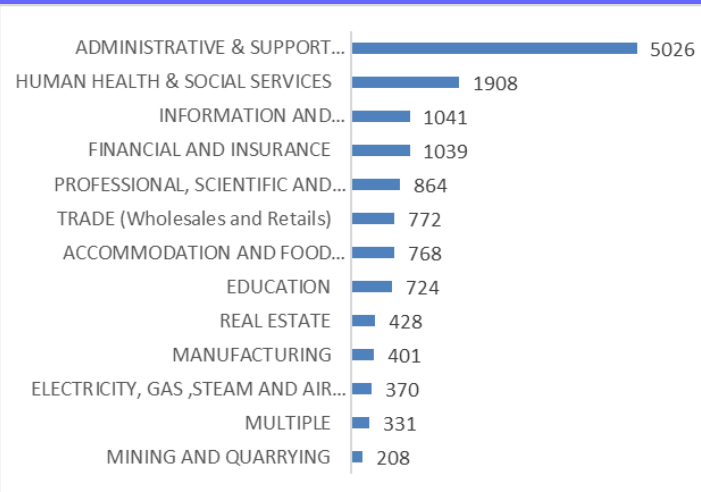
Source: ADSR Research

Job Vacancies in 2021 Across Sectors



Source: ADSR Research

Job Vacancies in 2022 Across Sectors



Source: ADSR Research

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