

## **PH.D. RESEARCH PROPOSAL BY JULIET TUFFOUR PREMPEH**

### **TITLE: LABOUR POLICIES AND MIGRATION: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPEAN AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA PRACTICES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Africa is the second-largest continent after Asia. The 49 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) had a total of about 1.19 billion people in 2023 whereas the population of Europe is approximately 749 million (Worldometer, 2023), accounting for more than two-thirds of the total population of the Eurozone. Most of Africa's economic growth has resulted from trade and has a large labour pool. However, most people in the region remain impoverished due to undefined comprehensive policies guiding the labour force. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2015), a labour policy may be understood as a vision, practical and comprehensive plan for achieving a country's labour goals. It brings together measures, programs and laws that influence the functioning of labour markets.

Growing evidence from scholars, Golub and Hayat, (2015) and Benjamin and Mbaye (2019) depict that, the current improvement in the economic growth of SSA is drawing greater attention to her labour policy and practices. The formal and private sector wage employment has grown too slowly to offset declines in public sector employment and the SSA region remains overwhelmingly informal, with very low wages, no benefits or job security, and hazardous working conditions (Shaikh, 2018).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Report (2021) posit that in 2022, around 12 per cent of the world's population are in extreme poverty, with the poverty threshold at 1.90 U.S. dollars a day. Between 2010 and 2019, the global proportion of people living on less than \$3.20 a day

decreased from 35% to 23% whereas, as of 2021, over a quarter of the global population (1.8 billion people) were living below \$3.20 a day whereas 1.2 billion were reported to be engaged in productive jobs and 42 per cent are from SSA not to even talk of the higher poverty-line (5.5 dollars daily) among the labour force in SSA.

Undoubtedly, the most fundamental cause of poverty in SSA is not entirely the absence of productive jobs, but the underutilisation of the labour force and outrageously low work wages and salaries from the inappropriate definition of wages and standards of living for the working population which accounts for approximately 47% of the labour force leading to income poverty (Ceglowski, Golub and Mbaye, 2015). In 2017, the 201 million unemployed people globally rose by an additional 2.7 million in 2018 (World Employment and Social Outlook, 2021) and the advent of the covid-19 crisis worsened the situation. This pandemic has posed labour absorption and economic development challenges between 2020 and 2022, though across the globe, but with a hugely significant impact on SSA (Fox and Gandi, 2021).

One of the main areas covered by European Union (EU) labour law is working conditions which are essential areas for ensuring high levels of employment and social protection throughout the EU. The EU created the European Centre of Expertise in labour law, employment and labour market policies in 2016 to cover legal, regulatory, economic, and policy aspects of employment and labour markets, including reforms with a great focus on the improved standard of living among citizens in the Member States. Additionally, Hendrickx (2019) asserted that the EU Commission adopts directives that its member countries incorporate into national laws and ensures through systematic monitoring that the rules are correctly implemented though with some level of discretion in transposing them into national legal orders. However, according to the European Commission Report (2019), the Commission may decide to as well start infringement proceedings

when member states go contrary to the laws and this is different in the case of SSA where entities are meant to regulate policies and employees, as these entities want and some even give jobs to employees without a clearly defined contract.

Every EU worker has minimum rights and obligations regarding workplaces health and safety, work equipment, specific risks protection for vulnerable workers, equal opportunities for both women and men in terms of equal treatment at work, pregnancy, leaves, protection against discrimination and laws on part-time work, fixed-term contracts, working hours, informing and consulting employees. Comparatively, these rights are rather completely the opposite of the policy practices within SSA. A study report according to the International Labour Organisation (2015) points out that, the labour force of SSA is mostly offered employment without security, health and work insurance and usually with no pension contributions to social security. Currently, the poverty rate of the European Union is 9.8 on average whilst SSA is still recorded as the region with the highest poverty rate levels in the world and the utmost challenge in designing and implementing comprehensive policy strategies that promote faster growth and poverty alleviation in SSA is imperative (ILO Report, 2021). Labour policies play a crucial role in addressing poverty and promoting socio-economic development.

In most SSA countries, there are challenges related to the regulation of labour policies and employment practices which includes the lack of effective regulatory entities, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and informal employment arrangements. Moreover, addressing these challenges requires research and efforts to strengthen labour policies, enhance the capacity of regulatory frameworks, raise awareness about labour rights, and foster an enabling environment for decent work. These, in the long term, have over the years propelled migration usually illegally from SSA to Europe, which has posed a massive threat to the EU and an unending discussion at

the European Parliament (EP). Though Europe is currently faced with declining demography coupled with a rapidly ageing population and low rates of birth. The EP report in 2023 points out that, pensioners are expected to account for approximately one-third of the EU population by 2050 which poses significant economic consequences on most sectors of the EU economy as a result, the EU has encouraged legal means of migration into their economy but on the other hand, the illegal migration arena seems to outstretch that of the legal process. The EU has a marked increase in funding from 3.1 billion euros between 2014 and 2020 for asylum seekers to 9.9 billion euros from 2021 to 2027 (European Commission Report 2021).

This research aims to assess and shed light on practices, challenges and opportunities in tackling poverty migration-induced challenges through labour-focused policies and undertaking a comparative analysis of labour policies in Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and contributing to the formulation of evidence-based policies that foster inclusive growth, alleviate poverty, control illegal migration, identify potential areas for improvement, and enhance the overall well-being of individuals

## **RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Over the years, most scholars have contributed substantially to the knowledge of research in Labour policies, laws and regulations, which have yielded great results and the adoption of change both within the Eurozone and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) regions, but there is no current record on research comparing labour policies of Europe and that of SSA interrelating to the utmost situation of the world, poverty. The basic feature of labour law and its policies in almost every country is

about a fair balance of interest, protection of integrity and economic advantage between the employees and the employers which are mediated through a contract of employment and should be covered by legislation or a common law which seem overlooked in some parts of the world. While labour policy regulation has been studied extensively in developed countries, and more recently in India and Latin America, few studies have assessed the nature of labour policy regulations on poverty alleviation and migration in SSA and a comparison with the European labour system, none has been done toward the eradication of poverty in SSA.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The central question that this project seeks to clarify and discuss in-depth is; how labour policy interactions are negotiated, regulated and discursively implemented. The questions below will consequently be asked in the establishment of:

1. What are the labour policies and laws practised in SSA and Europe and how comprehensively structured and documented are these respective policies?
2. How effective are the labour policies and rights operationalized regarding employer-employee cooperation in SSA and Europe?
3. How are the available labour policies linked to poverty alleviation and achievement so far toward the attainment of the SDGs?
4. How comparatively do labour policies influence poverty and migration of working populations across these continents?

## **OBJECTIVES**

Generally, the objective of this study is to comparatively analyse labour policies and poverty alleviation. These objectives are set for the accomplishment of this study.

1. To assess the labour policies and laws practised in SSA and Europe, and ascertain how comprehensively structured and documented they are.
2. To explore the effectiveness of these employment policy practices in SSA and Europe.
3. To investigate if the available labour policies are linked to poverty alleviation and its achievement toward the attainment of the SDGs.
4. To interrogate and analyse comparatively how labour policies and poverty influence the migration of working populations across these continents.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Empirical studies posit that the annual labour of every nation is the fund that originally supplies all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it consumes and consists either in the immediate produce of that labour or purchased with that produce from other nations. According to Smith (2002), the nation will be better or worse supplied with all the necessaries and conveniences for which it has occasion, but this proportion must be regulated by two different circumstances: first, by the skill, dexterity and judgment with which its labour is generally applied; and secondly, by the proportion between the number of those who are employed in useful labour and that of those who are not so employed. The lower wage allocation despite skills acquisition by the SSA labour force has resulted in a brain drain over the years among the workforce according to previous studies reported by the World Bank (2018). Studies according to Azevedo, Inchauste, Olivieri & Winkler

(2013) delineate that labour income is the most important contributor to changes in poverty which accounts for approximately 50 per cent reduction in extreme poverty, whereas more and better-paying jobs are the key factors behind poverty reduction over the past decades.

A considerable body of literature has proven that, in recent years, there have been increasing developments at the European level regarding the employment relationship in legislation contrary to that of SSA, with the protection of workers' rights in labour laws and collective agreements as well as in the adequacy of legal regulation in adapting to these changes. Pesaran & Shin (2020) argue that a listing of pertinent criteria, relying on the facts relating to the performance of work and the remuneration must establish an appropriate mechanism for monitoring developments in the labour force to be able to formulate policies and implementation of measures concerning the labour in SSA. Stockhammer (2018) points out that the rise of underpaid jobs in most SSA countries is due to labour market flexibility and changes over the past decades in wage factors conveniently as well as the lack of implementable regulation of a policy.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study therefore would elaborate on the coordination of theories of labour policies, poverty and migration. The framework would investigate the relationship between labour policies, poverty, and migration and explore how labour policies, when inadequately designed or enforced, can contribute to poverty among working populations, potentially leading to migration as a means of seeking better economic prospects. It also considers how labour policies that prioritize social protection, fair wages, and decent work can reduce poverty and act as a deterrent to migration. With the link between labour policies and poverty reduction, the framework would examine how

labour policies directly impact the income, working conditions, and overall well-being of workers. It considers the influence of structural factors, such as economic disparities, political stability, educational opportunities, and social inclusion, on poverty levels and migration patterns. Hence, the human capital theory, the dual labour market theory, the structuralism theory, the new economics of labour migration, and the capability Approach theories would be discussed extensively for the purpose of this study.

## **PROPOSED METHODOLOGY**

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative research methods will be ideal. Content analysis of documents, academic works, internet sources and reports as well as current labour laws and policy reports and poverty alleviation interrelation cases of SSA and Europe as a baseline for this research assessment. Regarding quantitative analysis, thus, Regression analysis, both linear and multiple regression analysis would be employed to run the comparable data since it is used to predict the value of a variable based on another variable. Data collected and gathered for this study will be analysed and assessed by performing extensive enquiry into a variety of corresponding issues regarding the studies and to determine relevant findings synthesising information on organisations and their influences that impede labour equity. Thus; comparing the policy practice of Europe as the independent variable and Sub-Saharan Africa and poverty as the dependent variables whereas graphs and tables would be used to interpret the results. And to equally estimate the predictions on the theoretical framework to allow for the determination of the overall fit of the framework and the relative contribution of the variance explained.



## **EXPECTED RESULTS**

Consequently, the results derived from these analyses are expected to be more reliable and therefore, to contribute to the understanding and to be useful for labour policy structuring, implementation and practices in SSA from the successes of the Eurozone, and to effect in poverty reduction strategies as well as identifying potential solutions to improve their effectiveness, alleviate most illegal migration challenges to EU, and to coordinate appropriate labour and trade transfers among both continents. The research will also contribute to the ongoing debate on labour, migration and poverty.

## **TIME FRAME FOR STUDY**

The project is expected to commence in November 2023, and this is a systematically planned period from the start to the completion and final submission of the thesis write-up. First 3 months – preparing the initial research plan with my supervisor whilst taking up the semester coursework. 4th to 6th Month – undertaking literature searches and defining my project. 7th to 10th month – taking graduate schools’ courses on advanced writing, researching and presentation whilst almost completing the first year and course work. 11th to 15th Month – Submission of thesis reports and a plan for writing take-off. 16th to 28th Month – Continue working on my thesis and field research with practical institutions under study. 29th to 36th Month – Completion and thesis submission period.

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