NATIONAL SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES NEXUS SKILL ACQUISITION ENHANCEMENT OF NIGERIAN YOUTHS: A CASE STUDY OF OYO STATE'S N-POWER BENEFICIARIES

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ABSTRACT

The N-power is one of the social empowerment programmes established by President Muhammed Buhari launched on 8th of June, 2016. This programme aimed at tackling unemployment challenges improving skill acquisition in the country. N-Power addresses the challenge of youth unemployment by providing a structure for large-scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development while linking its core and outcomes to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the larger economy. This study aims to evaluate the significant impact of the National Social Investment Programme on skills acquisition of the youth using N-power programme in Oyo State. From the empirical study, the research design adopted for this study was the survey design. The researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique in selecting sample from the population of study. Sample sizes of one hundred and forty-six respondents were selected for study. The researcher utilized the questionnaire in gathering quantitative data for the study. The chi-square statistical technique is used in testing the hypotheses stated to guide the study. The findings show that the programme has been significant in supporting skills improvement and youth welfare, but not complemented with enough capital that supports business development. It recommends among other things, The N-Power beneficiaries who have been empowered through skill acquisition should be given soft loans to set up their businesses. Thus, the Federal Government should provide interest-free loans to interested volunteers to start up their small or medium-scale enterprises after their vocational training.

Keywords: *Skills Acquisition; National Social Investment Programme (NSIP); N-power Programme: Oyo State; Nigeria*

Introduction

Youth development in the absence of job opportunities and the enabling environment that ensures adequate youth empowerment through skill acquisition and entrepreneurial activities is one of the major challenges facing the nation. Unemployment in Nigeria can be traced back to the era of oil boom in 1970s. During this period, Nigerian government and individuals abandoned skills acquisition and utilization through diversified entrepreneurship practices that have the capability to boost both individual and the country's economic ego (Uduak & Chritiana, 2016).

It is highly commendable that successive governments have tried addressing the problem of youth development by setting up of statutory bodies such as ministries, departments and agencies and through established agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Directorate of Food and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), and the National Poverty Alleviation Program (NAPEP) (Ngozi and Agnes 2021). However, due to the inability of these statutory bodies to effectively tackle the ever increasing problem of youth development in the country, successive administrations in Nigeria have tended to function with interventionist programmes such as Youth Empowerment and DevelopmentInitiative (YEDI), Young Entrepreneurs of Nigeria (YEN), Youth Empowering People (YEP),Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN), Youth Initiative for SustainableAgriculture in Nigeria (YISA), Youth Entrepreneur Support Program (YES-P), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and most recently, N-power.

The Nigerian government in 2016 introduced a comprehensive National Social Safety Net Programme (NASSP) as part of its Social Investment Programmes (SIP) among which N-Power was established. N-Power is a platform that the Nigerian government created to absorb the large population of her unemployed youths. It is the National Social Investment Programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria to empower and create jobs. In addition, the program is for Nigerian citizens between 18 and 35 years of age. N-Power's standard programs ensure that each participant acquires the skills necessary to find or create work. The program is structured into the graduate and non-graduate category. The N-Power Volunteer Corp, which is the graduate's category program of N-Power, aims to deploy 500,000 trained graduates. These graduates will assist in improving the country's public services inadequacies in education, health, and civic education. Some of them will also help in actualizing Nigeria's food security and self-sufficiency aspiration.

Most youths graduate from school without the needed skills or competencies that would enable them function in today's emerging society. Going by these data, it is apparent that the role of skills acquisition in the creation of employment among the youths may not be overemphasized. The study, therefore, seeks to investigate whether Social Investment Programme has enhanced skills acquisition in Oyo State in particular and Nigeria at large, taking N-power as a study programme.

Thus, we examine the efficiency of Social Investment Programme in enhancing skill acquisition in Oyo State through the N-power using the following questions:

• How does the Social Investment Programme improves kill acquisition in Oyo State?

• What are they challenges constraining effective implementation of the N-Power programmes in Oyo State?

The study is structured in the following sections: after the introduction, second section presents the literature review, followed by theoretical review in the third section. Methodology and results are discussed in the fourth section. The fifth section contains the conclusion, followed the final section which consists of recommendations.

Literature Review

Ifatimehin, Isyak and Omale (2020) examined the effect of the N-Power scheme on youth empowerment in Anyigba area of Kogi state, Nigeria. The population of the study was put at 491 which is the total number of N-Power beneficiaries in Anyigba in 2016, from which a sample size of 220 was obtained using Taro Yamane's. Data for the study were sourced primarily via questionnaire and secondarily via web articles, journals, seminar reports, etc. Descriptive and inferential statistics and One-Way ANOVA analysis were used for the data analysis and test of hypothesis. The study found that N-Power scheme has to a very large extent empowered the youths in Anyigba in skills acquisition, financial status, self-reliance and productivity among the youth. The study also gave some recommendations among which is that the government should initiate more youth empowerment programs for development, the government should provide mandatory training and workshops in the area of ICT and agriculture to enhance the beneficiaries' technical skills.

Dare, Juwon and Akeem (2019) investigated the effects of entrepreneurial skills on youth employment in Kogi State, using N-Power as a case study. Survey research design was adopted. The study adopted snowball sampling technique to select N-Power beneficiaries. A well-designed questionnaire was used as a viable instrument to collect data from beneficiaries in N-Teach, N-Health, N-Tax and N-Agro. Data collected were analyzed using Multiple Regression and Ordered Probit Regression Model. Finding shows that entrepreneurial skills development has significant effect on N-Power beneficiaries in Kogi State. Finding furthers shows that interpersonal relation skill, technology adoption skill, decision-making skill and risk-taking skill have significant and positive relationship with youth self-employment in Kogi State. The study concluded that the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills is a vital approach towards self-employment. The study recommended that the government and policy-makers should device special focus for interpersonal relation skill, decision-making skill, technology adoption skill and risk-taking skill of N-Power beneficiaries; with less attention to financial literacy and creative thinking skills.

Odey and Sambe (2019) assessed the contribution of N-Power programme to youth empowerment in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study were; to determine the contribution of N-Power programme to youth empowerment in Cross River, to identify challenges facing the programme in

ensuring empowerment of youth in the study area and to suggest ways of improving the N-Power programme for more effective youth empowerment in Nigeria. The study adopted cross sectional survey design while cluster random sampling was used to select beneficiaries. Questionnaires were used to collect data as Key Informant Interview was also used to compliment Questionnaire. Furthermore, the study used percentages for analysis of data. The study discovered that the beneficiaries of N-Power programme were mostly composed of N-Teach strand of the programme, followed by N-Health strand, N-Agro and Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS) strands respectively. The study also found that N-Power contributed to empowerment of youth through poverty reduction, proficiency skills in ICT, financial empowerment, on the job experience and investment in small scale businesses. However, there were challenges faced by the programmme in empowerment of youth which included delay in payment of allowance, unpaid allowances, distance to working places and teacher training for most of N-Teach beneficiaries. The study therefore recommended for prompt and timely payment of the stipends to beneficiaries of the programme by Federal government, timely sorting of problems of unpaid allowances, posting nearest to place of residence and teacher education for N-Teach categories.

Uduak and Christiana (2016) investigated the contributions of Skills Acquisition by National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State,Nigeria to unemployment reduction in the state. It began with the recognition that unemployment was on the rise in Akwa Ibom State

with an average of 19.5% in the last decade, but NDE was training individuals for self-employment, with what effect? They employed a combination of both primary and secondary data to conduct our analysis. Structured questionnaires were administered on both the trainers, trainees that have completed the Skills Acquisition training, and trainees currently under training. Secondary evidences provided by the state NDE office were also used to examine the economic

relationship of the variables. Our findings suggest that there is appositive nexus between Skills Acquisition by NDE and unemployment reduction in Akwa Ibom State. These positive influences are not however without challenges, ranging from political willingness of the government to actually implement and care for the training facilities to regional proximities of the unemployed to the training centers, among others. However, the result of the income contributions of NDE in the state was mixed. Though traces of income effect really exist, the effect was minimal to attract wide acceptance.

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Development Theory

The human capital theory developed by G. S. Becker in 1967 was used in this study. According to human capital theory, training and development improves employees' performance by transferring practical knowledge and abilities, which in turn boosts employees' lifetime wages and future income. According to the human capital theory, a person's decision to invest in training is based on an analysis of the net present value of the costs and benefits of doing so. It also holds that well-trained employees are productive individuals (Becker, 1967 in Ogwola, 2022). It is considered that people make an initial investment in training and subsequently receive the benefits of that investment. As a result, human capital is a production tool that can be used to generate more output with more investment.

Human beings are both social and economic capital, according to the above-described human capital theory, which makes them highly strategic for generating and accumulating wealth. Human capital is better positioned to contribute to national development the more sophisticated and developed it is (via education and training).

The theory is therefore regarded as one of the most pertinent ideas for describing human growth and empowerment in Nigeria, as demonstrated by the explanation of human capital theory provided above by its proponent Becker (1967), which is mentioned in Ogwola (2022, p. 35). In addition to creating jobs and reducing poverty, the N-Power program's beneficiaries' skills and potential are developed through various empowerment programs (particularly those that emphasize education and skill development), which also improves their quality of life and puts them in a position to make significant contributions to the development of the country.

Methodology

Research Design

This is the strategic plan for a research project, setting out the broad outline, and key features of the work to be undertaken, including the methods of data collection and analysis to be employed, and showing how the research strategy addresses the objectives of the study (Marshall, 1998). The research design that was used in this study is the non-experimental research design. A non-experimental study uses various methods to describe data and describe the relationship among variables.

Sample and Sampling Techniques/Methods

The study's sample is drawn from the population of N-power I Ibadan, Oyo sate. The sample technique that was used for this study is simple random sampling technique. Simple random is one of the types of probability sampling techniques where all members of observation have equal chance of being selected, beneficiaries were chosen from their place of primary assignment.

Methods of Data Collection.

This refers to the mechanism that was used in collecting primary data or information from the field. The study made use of a survey method for its data collection. Thus, structured questionnaires were administered. The administration of the questionnaires provided a comparatively low or cheap cost of collecting information and it was also an effective means of reaching a large number of people within considerable short period of time. Also, face to face interviews were used in administering the questionnaire in order gather information from the respondents during the time of the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the way in which the collected data was presented and interpreted in a meaningful way and in which explanations are given for observations (Soyombo, 2003). The quantitative data obtained was evaluated through bivariate modes of analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (S.P.S.S) 23 version was used in collating and analyzing the data. The chi-square (x^2) test was employed to test to draw meaningful conclusion. This is because of the structure of the questionnaire and the scale it was coded. This was carried out using the chi-square formula;

$$x^2 = \sum \frac{(E-O)2}{E}$$

Where O=Observed frequency
E=Expected frequency
Σ=Summation
The test was done at 5% significance level with a degree of freedom
given as V=(R–C) (C–1).
Where: R=the number of rows and
C=the number of columns

Validity Test of the Research Instrument

To ensure that the research instrument actually measured what is supposed to measure, the questionnaire was given to researcher's supervisor for verification and corrections.

Qualification of the Respondents: Figure 1.0 shows that out of 146 respondents, 24(16.5%) are masters holders, 58(39.8%) are degree holders, 11(7.5%) are NCE holders, and 1(0.7%) is P.hd holder while 50(34.2%) did not indicate their qualifications.

Figure 1.0Qualification of the Respondents
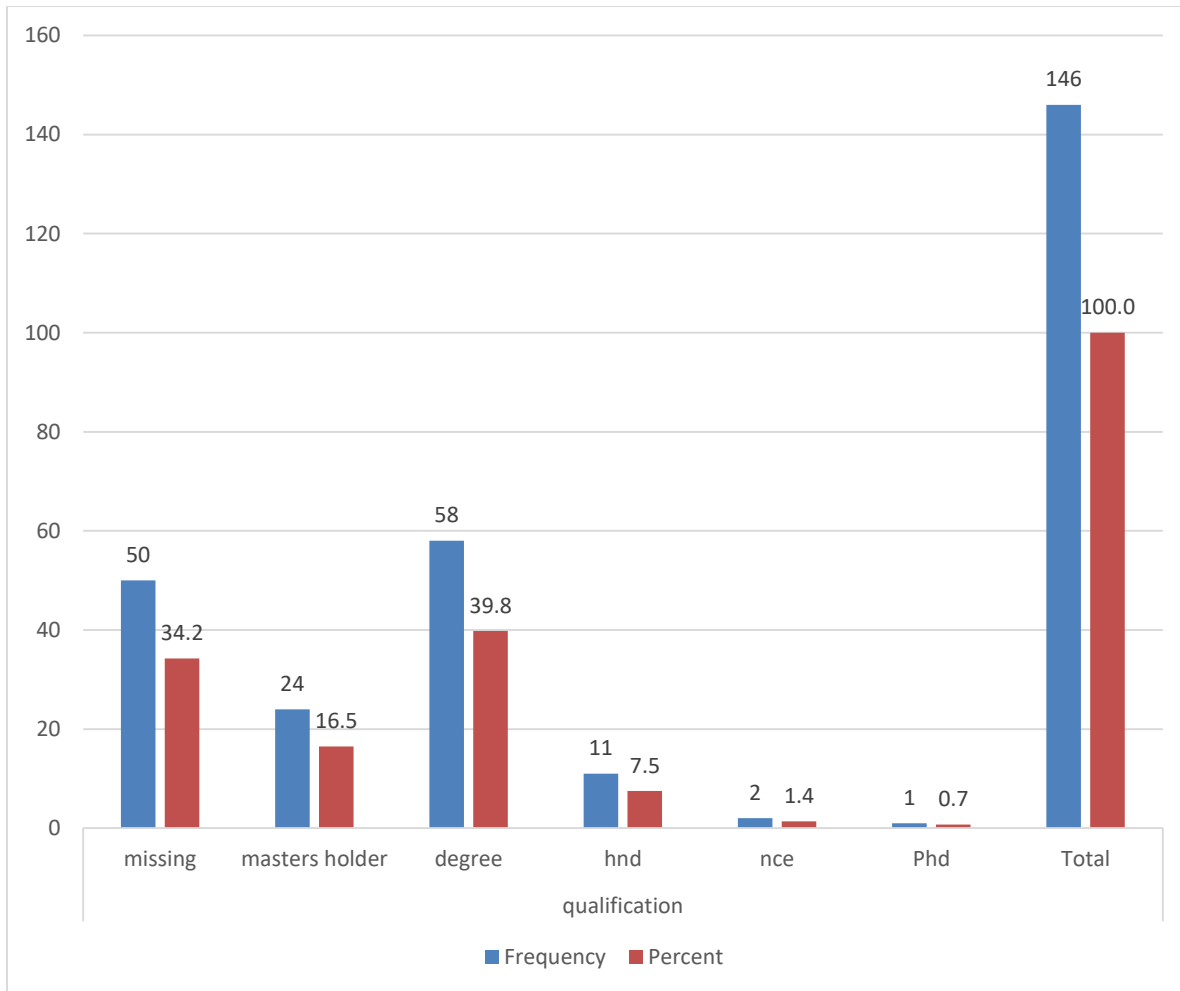
Source: Authors survey 2019

Age of the Respondents: The ages of the sampled respondents range from 15 to 35 years and was classified into three distinct groups which are: 18-23 years, 24-29 years and 30-35 years. From the Figure 1.1 below, the age distribution of the respondents is skewed to the left and it shows that majority of the respondents' age falls between 25-33. Thus the average age of the respondents is 29, implying that the majority of the beneficiaries in the study are in their youthful age

Figure 1.1 Ages of the Respondents
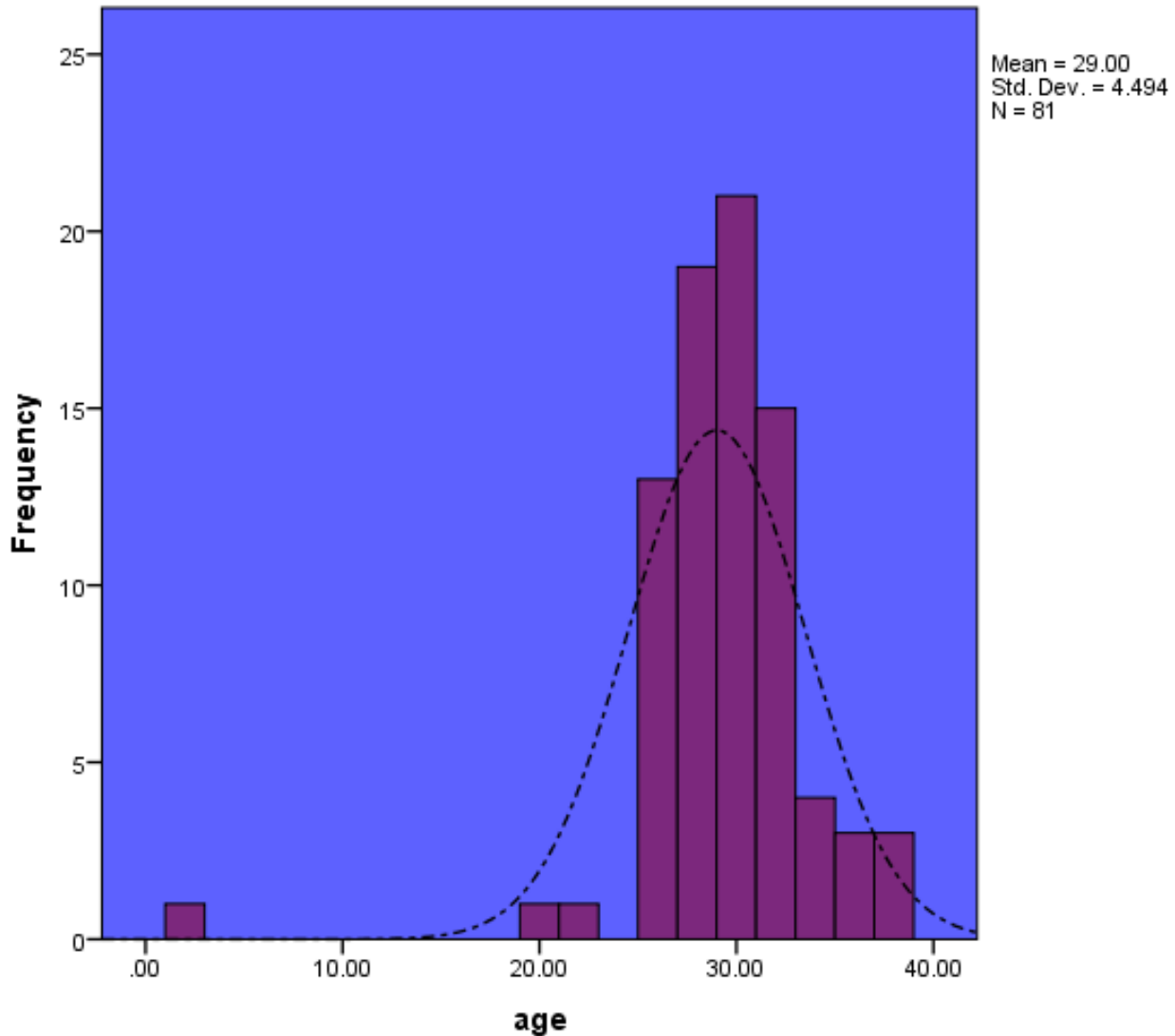
Source: Authors survey 2019

Monthly Stipend of the Beneficiaries: This was measured in naira and it ranges from ₦(10,000-30,000). Figure 5.6, the curve and the mean value reveal that almost all the beneficiaries receive ₦30000 as monthly stipend.This actually tallies with 2019 Nigeria minimum wage Act of ₦30,000.

Figure 1.2 Monthly Stipends of the Respondents

Mean = 29801.98
Std. Dev. = 1990.074
N = 101
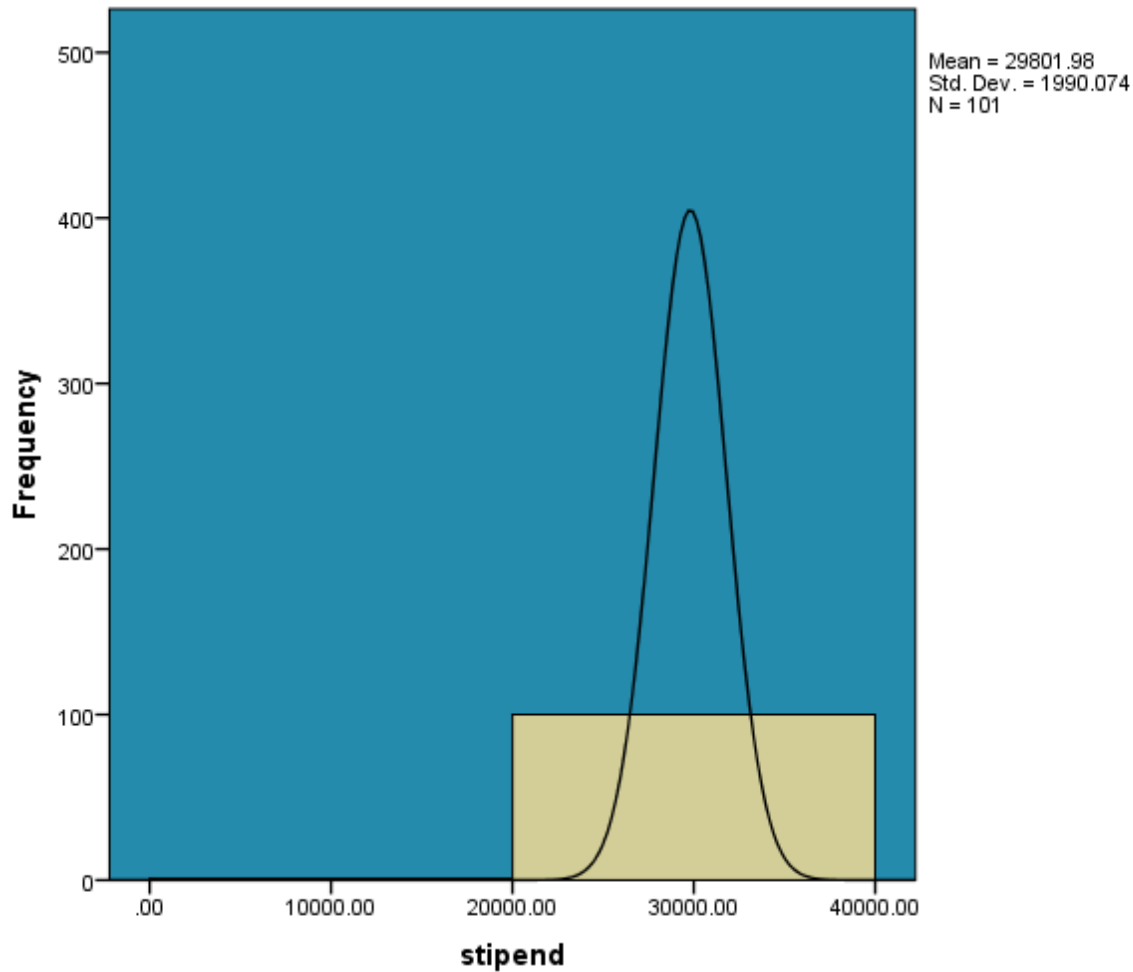
Source: Authors survey 2019

Table 1.3 shows the crosstab distribution of N-power scheme and skill improvement. The respondents were asked if the scheme has been capable of improving their skill, 92 respondents from N-teach responded "yes" while 21 responded "no", 1 respondents from N-health responded "yes" while 1 respondent responded "no", 14 respondents from N-agro responded "yes" while 8 responded "no", this is followed by 6 other respondents who said yes and 2 other respondents said no. From their responses, it can therefore be ascertained that there exists a positive relationship between the scheme and skill improvement because the frequencies of the beneficiaries that say yes is more than the frequencies that say no.

In addition, looking at 1.4, we can see that there is no significant variation among the beneficiaries concerning their views on the skill acquisition. This is because the asymptotic significance (0.225) is greater than conventional criteria (0.05). Hence, this implies that N-power scheme has improved the skill acquisition of the beneficiaries regardless of the categories.

Table 1.3 Crosstab of N-Power Scheme And Skill Improvement

N- Power scheme		Skill Improvement		
		YES	NO	Total
N-Teach	Count	92	21	113
	Expected count	88.1	24.9	133.0
N- Health	Count	1	1	2
	Expected count	1.6	0.4	2.0
N- Agro	Count	14	8	22
	Expected count	17.1	4.9	22.0
Others	Count	6	2	8
	Expected count	6.2	1.8	8.0
Total	Count	113	32	145
	Expected count	113.0	32.0	145.0

Source: Author's computation (2019)

Table 1.4   Chi-Square Tests N-Power Scheme And Skill Improvement

	Value	Degree of freedom	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.359[a]	3	0.225
Likelihood Ratio	3.934	3	0.269
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.569	1	0.109
N of Valid Cases	145		

Source: Author's computation (2019)

a. 4 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44.

$$\chi^2 = 4.359, df = 3, \ sig > 0.05.$$

Conclusion and Recommendations

The acquisition of skills is a vital approach towards self-employment. It is quite important to note that a collection of skills such as interpersonal is instrumental to resolving entrepreneurial issue and achieving success among young people in Oyo State. The findings of this study proved that National Social Investment Programme (such as N-Power Programme) is paramount to enhancing the skill acquisition of youth in Oyo State.

However, there is no doubt that there are numerous factors affecting the skills acquisition of youth in N-Power Programme in Oyo State. It is certain that the changes in the entrepreneurial skills of youth in N-Power Programme in Oyo State were caused by these factors. Among other factors, beneficiaries" mind-set, entrepreneurial spirit and interest and readiness affect the entrepreneurial skills of youth in N-Power Programme in Oyo State. It is possible that majority of the youth in N-Power Programme in Oyo State are preoccupied with the token (N30,000 monthly stipend) attached to the programme. Meanwhile, funding and corruption are not significant enough to affect the skills acquisition of youth in N-Power Programme in Kogi State.

Sequel to the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made that:

1. Loans should be provided to N-Power beneficiaries who have gained empowerment via skill development so they can launch their enterprises.Therefore, following their vocational training, interested volunteers should be eligible for interest-free loans from the federal government to launch small or medium-sized businesses.2. Federal Government should ensure prompt and timely payment of the stipends to beneficiaries of the programme.

3. In order to address the issue of unpaid allowances, the National Social Investment Program should make sure that beneficiaries who experience challenges that impact the payment of their allowances receive prompt and prudent treatment.

4. Exit packages should be given to the beneficiaries at the end of the program to help them feel even more empowered.

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