DOES N-POWER AS A SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAM REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT ANDPOVERTY OF NIGERIAN YOUTHS? A CASE STUDY OF OYO STATE

AIJAEFM
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Kassari Daniel, Otohinoyi
Department of Economics,
Faculty of Management and Social Sciences,
Confluence
University of Science and Technology,
Osara, Kogi State, Nigeria.
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1850-8247

Babajide Fowowe
Department of Economics,
Faculty of Economics,
University of Ibadan.

Segun Zacchaeus, Onifade
Department of Economics,
Thomas Adewumi University,
Okoro-irese, Kwara State,
Nigeria
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9766-1973

Abraham Bello, Monday
Department of Accounting,
Faculty of Management and
Social Sciences Confluence
University of Science and Technology,
Osara, Kogi State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author:
Kassari Daniel, Otohinoyi
Department of Economics,
Faculty of Management and Social
Sciences,
Confluence
University of Science and Technology,
Osara, Kogi State, Nigeria.
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1850-8247

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of the N-Power program on unemployment and poverty among the youths of Oyo State, Nigeria.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 findings show that the Social Investment Program has significantly enhanced skill acquisition across all the beneficiaries of different categories. The study also shows that the scheme has been able to reduce absolute poverty among the beneficiaries. Furthermore, the study also reveals that the non-positive attitudes of the beneficiaries to them are because of delay in the payment of stipends, lack of proper monitoring of the beneficiaries and non-permanence of the scheme. Based on the findings, the study recommended that government should implement more tangible measures, including internal supervisors, to keep an eye on beneficiaries who are acting casually about their responsibilities at their primary assignment location; beneficiaries should be stationed near their areas of assignment, that is, proximity to the place of primary assignment site should be considered; the federal government should release sufficient funding for the program to be implemented smoothly and successfully; when the program is over, the beneficiaries should get exit packages that will further increase their sense of empowerment.

Keywords: *Social Investment Programme, N-Power, Poverty, Poverty reduction, Unemployment*

Introduction

Unemployment and poverty have constituted daunting and challenging problem in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, there has been initiatives in the past by various government to try and alleviate poverty and stem unemployment (Rex and Daniel, 2024). According to Aminu (2024), the menacing of social and economic problem of poverty in Nigeria like many developing countries past governments to introduced N-power programme aimed at reducing poverty in Nigeria particularly Oyo State.

The issue of unemployment has been undermining the economies of many countries recently, endangering the well-being of their citizens which has resulted in dissatisfaction among the populace in many countries (Anho, 2014). Lack of employment opportunities for young people, particularly recent graduates, has been identified as a major contributing factor to youth anxiety as well as other social vices like rape, kidnapping, oil bunkering, armed robbery, political thuggery, destitution, poverty, internet fraud, and all types of disturbances like Boko Haram and militants, which are observed in the Niger Delta and the Northeast, respectively (Zakaria, 2006) and (Ajufo, 2013).There is no doubt that the N-power scheme has positively impacted the youth in Nigeria by providing the temporary job, many youth were exonerated from abject poverty, in fact some of the beneficiaries even after disengaging from the N-Power program they can do something meaningful that can sustain them (Onuoha *etal* 2019) However, successive government efforts on youth employment programmes such as; the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as well as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) seem to have yielded marginal result (Attah, *et al*, 2021).The International Agencies were not left out. We had interventions by the World Bank (IBRD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO) among others. In spite of these interventions, poverty level and rate have remained very high in Nigeria (Anho, 2014). While poverty is a result of economic, social, and political processes that interact and reinforce one another to either ease or exacerbate the state of deprivation in which the impoverished people live, economic development remains the determining factor in the success of poverty reduction efforts. (Osmond, 2015).

The Nigerian government established the N-Power platform to accommodate most of its young jobless population and raise their level of living through programs aimed at reducing poverty. To combat poverty and hunger nationwide, the Federal Government of Nigeria developed the National Social Investments Programmes (NSIP) in 2016.

Since 2016, these programmes have supported over 4 million beneficiaries across the country (Faruk and Simon, 2018). The question is; why Nigerian youths remain unemployed despite all these praiseworthy poverty reduction programmes and resources at the disposal of government? Will this new N-Power be capable of reducing poverty and improving the welfare of the people?

The study is structured in the following sections: after the introduction, the 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 by the final section which consists of recommendations.

Literature Review

Many people have a predisposition to view Keynes as the creator of the Welfare State and to argue that the Keynesian revolution justified the need for a sizable public sector in the economy (Mariam, 2010). The use of Keynesian theory helps one comprehend how government policies affect the welfare of its citizens. The theory's primary significance lies in its capacity to illustrate the significance of government intervention in economic affairs.

Aminu and Aliyu (2024) examined N-power Programme and poverty reduction in NigerState, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with the population of 31,107 beneficiaries benefiting from N-power programmes. Taro Yamane formula was adopted where the study arrived at 392. The study revealed that there exist negative perceptions among these beneficiaries regarding the program's effectiveness in addressing these critical issues. The study further identifies several key factors affecting the implementation of N-Power programmes toward poverty alleviation in Niger State.

Similarly, Boris and Richard (2023) examined the impact of N-power programme on youth empowerment in Enugu state. A survey research design was adopted for the study. Data were generated through primary and secondary sources. The findings reveal that N-power programme is confronted with numerous challenges, such as no link to job opportunities and credit facilities after completing of the vocational training and non-provision of free interest loan to the beneficiaries who are interested in starting small-scale enterprises after their vocational training. It was also revealed that the implementation of the programme is characterized by corrupt practices, lack of adequate funding, lack of transparency and accountability in the management of the programme, delayed payment of stipends to the beneficiaries and overbearing hands and interest by the politicians.

Danjuma, Efuna and Nweke (2022) investigated the appraisal of N-power programme and poverty reduction in Nigeria. this paper reviewed secondary sources of data focused at expounding personal, interpersonal and environmental resources made available by N-Power to Nigerians which empower and motivate Nigerian youth to perform valid social roles and activities aimed at improving their living conditions. Major findings established that uncertainties in policy direction of the Nigerian Federal Government negatively impact on

the efficiency of the N-Power's participants and volunteers, as they believe that their job with the government is not secured.

Furthermore, Hauwau, Comfort and Amina (2024) examined the effect of the N-Power social welfare program on the economic empowerment of urban poor females in Garki Village, FCT. Anchored on the empowerment theory, the study adopted the survey research design and sampled a total of 100 urban poor females in Garki Village, FCT. Data collected from the respondents was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. A cut-off means of 2.50 was used for decision making. Data was presented using descriptive statistics in a tabular or numerical form. Findings revealed that, N-Power social welfare program has significant effect on the economic empowerment of urban poor females in Garki Village, FCT.

Effuna, Jacho and Godiya (2023) attempted to provide valuable data on the impact of the National N-Power scheme on youth employment in Nasarawa state, 2016 – 2022. Two research questions were raised to guide the study, and two research propositions were formulated for the study. The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The population used was 25,688 comprising teachers and beneficiaries of N-Power programme from some selected local government in Nasarawa State. The sample size of the study stood at 295, which was determined using purposive sampling techniques. Data from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively using simple percentages and while data from the secondary sources were analyzed using content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that N-Power programme has significantly improved employment expansion of the beneficiaries in Nasarawa State. It was also revealed that N-Power programme has impacted on the unemployment rate in Nasarawa State.

Theoretical Review

This study is appropriate for a variety of theories. These theories include the theory of public policy implementation, elite theory, systems theory, and others. However, elite theory was used in the research. This theory is more suited for this investigation since it became more widely accepted in academia at the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries thanks to the writings of classical Italian political theorists Vilfredo (1935) and Gaetano (1939). Since then, scientific social literature has extensively acknowledged and examined the existence, function, and behavior of the elite. The term "elite" refers to everyone who has been exposed to education, has connections and talent, and has access to political and financial resources. They also have significant influence on the political, economic, cultural, social, and intellectual life of the country (Putnam, 1976). According to Mohammed and Umar (2024), this group of people (a privileged minority) is endowed with or distinguished by organizational skills, leadership talents, knowledge and information, drive, and ambition.

This theory primarily relates to the role of elites in policymaking, which helps to explain how N-power affects youth poverty alleviation in Oyo State. Elites are those who determine policy, such as the Nigerian vice president's office, which established and supervised the N-Power Program. As a result, they frequently have a tendency to formulate policies that match their values and interests.

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 conclusions. 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
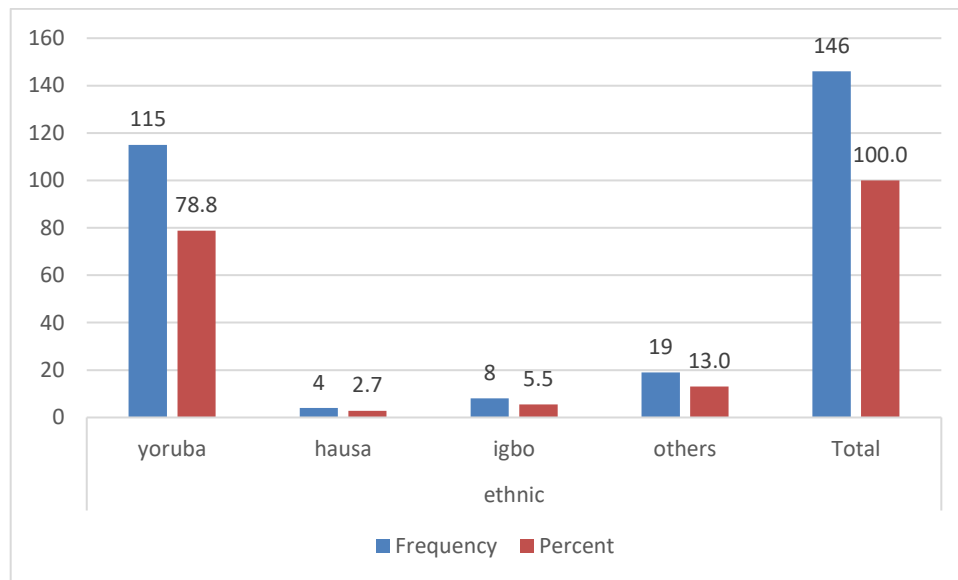
C=the number of columns

Validity Test of the Research Instrument

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

The Ethnic group of the Respondents: The respondents' ethnic groups are categorized into Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Figure 1 shows that out of 146 respondents,115 representing 78.8%are yorubas, 4 representing 2.7% are Hausas and 8 representing 5.5% are Igbos while 19 representing 13% did not indicate their ethnic groups.
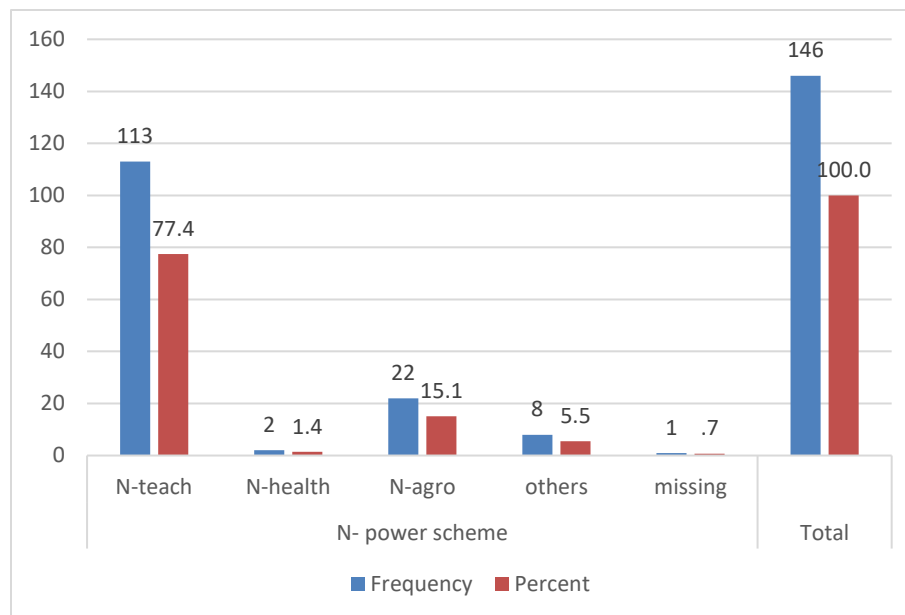
The category of the Respondents in the Scheme: The categories were divided into N-teach, N-health,N-agro and others. From Figure 2, out of 146 respondents, 113(77.4%) are in N-teach, 2(1.4%) are in N-health, 22(15.1%) are in N-agro, 8(5.5%) are in other categories while 1(0.7%) did not indicate the category he belongs.

Figure 1. Distributions by Ethnics

Source: Authors survey 2019

Figure 2. Categories of the Respondents

Source: Authors survey 2019

Table 1.0 shows the crosstab distribution of N-power scheme and employment through the scheme. The respondents were asked if they are gainfully employed their skill from N-power scheme, 80 respondents from N-teach responded "YES" while 30 responded "NO", 1 respondents from N-health responded "YES" while 1 respondent responded "NO", 14 respondents from N-agro responded "YES" while 6 responded "NO", this is followed by 7 other respondents who said "YES and 1 other respondents said "NO". From their responses, it can therefore be ascertained that there exists a positive relationship between the scheme and skill acquisition because the frequencies of the beneficiaries that say "YES" is more than the frequencies that say "NO".

Table 1.0 Crosstab of N-Power Scheme and Gainfully Employed Skill.

N-Power category		Skill Acquisition		Total
		YES	NO	
N- teach	Count	90	21	111
	Expected	86.9	24.1	111
N-health	Count	1	1	2
	Expected	1.5	0.5	2
N-agro	Count	14	6	20
	Expected	14.6	5.6	20
Others	Count	7	1	8
	Expected	5.8	2.2	8
Total	Count	102	38	140
	Expected	102.0	38.0	140.0

In addition, looking at Table 1.1, we can see that there is no significant variation among the beneficiaries concerning their views on skill acquisition. This is because the asymptotic significance (0.313) is greater than conventional criteria (0.05). Hence, this implies that N-power. Hence, this implies that N-power scheme has enhanced the skill acquisition of the beneficiaries regardless of the categories. This result agrees with Akintolu and Oyewole (2017) where they found that NDE skill acquisition programme has enough schemes and type of job from which the beneficiaries acquired necessary skills that guaranteed their employment.

Table 1.1 Chi-Square Test for Employment

	value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	1.479[a]	3	.687
Likelihood Ratio	1.564	3	.668
Linear-by-Linear Association	.150	1	.699
No. of Valid Cases	140		

Source: Author's computation (2019)

Table 2.0 shows the crosstab distribution of N-power scheme and absolute poverty. The respondents were asked if they have acquired skill from N-power scheme, 97 respondents from N-teach responded "YES" while16 responded "NO", no respondent from N-health responded "YES" while 2 respondents responded "NO", 15 respondents from N-agro responded "YES" while 6 responded "NO", this is followed by 5 other respondents who said yes and 3 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. This shows that the scheme has really reduced absolute poverty.

Furthermore, looking at Table 2.1, there is a variation to which the scheme has reduced absolute poverty among the categories. This is because the asymptotic significance (0.04) is less than conventional criteria (0.05). Hence, this implies that N-power scheme has been able to reduce absolute poverty but not in the same magnitude because their stipends differ.

Table 2.0 Crosstab of N-Power Scheme and Absolute Poverty

N-power scheme		Poverty reduction		Total
		YES	NO	
N-Teach	Count	97	16	113
	Expected count	91.8	21.2	113.0
N-Health	Count	0	2	2
	Expected count	1.6	0.4	2.0
N-Agro	Count	15	6	21
	Expected count	17.1	3.9	21.0
others	Count	5	3	8
	Expected count	3.9	1.5	8.0
Total	Count	117	27	144
	Expected count	117.0	27.0	144.0

Source: Author's computation (2019)

Table 2.1 Chi-Square Test for N-Power Scheme and Absolute Poverty

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.406[a]	3	.004
Likelihood Ratio	11.097	3	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.440	1	.020
No of Valid Cases	144		

Source: Author's computation (2019)

a. 4 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .38.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall objective of the study is to examine whether N-power program has significant impact on poverty and unemployment reduction in Oyo State, Nigeria. The findings show that there is a significant relationship between involvement N-power, poverty and unemployment reduction. Most of the beneficiaries have acquired skills from the scheme, by implication; the skill acquired can make them gainfully employed which will lead to a reduction in absolute poverty. It could be concluded that the beneficiaries are now able to afford the basic needs of life such as good accommodation, good water, improved medical services and basic meals through the program. Therefore, the more such a program as this is established the more the welfare of the people will increase. However, the programme has been characterized by some bottlenecks. Therefore, this study has made some recommendations that would go a long way in resolving some of these challenges. Based on the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations:

1. The government should implement more tangible measures, including internal supervisors, to keep an eye on beneficiaries who are acting casually about their responsibilities at their primary assignment location.

2. To improve the program's sustainability and efficiency, issues like centralized governance and stipend payout delays should be resolved.

3. Beneficiaries should be stationed near their areas of assignment; proximity to the principal assignment site should be considered.

4. It is important to keep the beneficiaries who are doing well and give them permanent jobs.

5. For the program to be implemented smoothly and successfully, the federal government should release sufficient funding.

6. When the program is over, the beneficiaries should get exit packages that will further increase their sense of empowerment.

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