

## N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates in Cross River State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This paper investigated N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates in Cross River State, Nigeria. One research question posed and converted to statement of hypothesis in line with the purpose of the study. Empirical literature review tenets were carried out and N-Power Programme framework was clearly captured. A survey research designed was used for the study with a population of 3351 unemployed graduate as target audience. A non-probability sampling techniques involving accidental sampling was adopted for the study and the sample consisted of 335 respondents which represents 10% of the total population. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection titled (NPPRQ) with 4 points Likert scale. The statistical tool used for data analysis was sample regression at .05 level of significant. Funding of the study revealed that N-Power programme has empowered unemployed graduates in the study area, especially skills acquisition and to some large extent, the programme has boosted their financial profiles. The paper therefore, recommended that there should be continuity of the programme by successive administration and regular payment of monthly stipends should be prioritised.

**Keywords:** Unemployed, N-Power, graduates, skills acquisition, empowerment and programme

### Background to the study

The society has always been divided into the “Have” and “Have not” (the rich and the poor). Hence, poverty or the state of being poor is not new in human history. A cursory survey of the poverty index globally, leaves researchers astonished (Ottong, 2006). Adegbusi (2012) asserts that poverty may have come to stay in many developing countries of the world, including Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa. This has continued to pose threats to the socio-economic development of such nations. This socio-economic divide has created social injustice in the society especially the developing nations like Nigeria. It has become so glaring that if this social gap created by income inequality is not checkmate, is bound to cause rife in the social system because if the poor cannot sleep because they are hungry, the rich will not sleep because the poor are awake. Hence, social wellbeing of a nation’s citizens has become the primary responsibility of government across the globe. This top concern has placed a heavy burden on not only the national government but also attract international intervention and declaration such as the Dakar 2000 declaration.

Projections by the World Bank Organization, over 90 million Nigerians will be poor by 2022. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the projected population of Nigeria has risen to 95.1 million people. Nigeria’s poverty reduction is said to be hampered by sluggish development, low human capital, labour market flaws, and shock *vulnerability* (World Bank Nigeria Poverty Assessment, 2022). Details from this report, further show that 4 in every 10 Nigerians live below the national poverty line. Many Nigerians lack access to education which is the key drive of poverty alleviation and basic amenities like power, safe drinking water, and improved sanitation. Similarly, jobs do not translate Nigerians’ hard work into a way out of poverty because the majority of employees are employed in small-scale domestic farms and non-farm companies; only 17% of Nigerian workers work in wage employment that can raise people out of poverty.

Today, one of the top policy priorities of Nigerian government in recent time is effort to alleviate citizens from absolute poverty. The government has established the National Social Investments Programmes (NSIP) in 2016, to tackle poverty and hunger across the country. The

suite of programmes under the NSIP focuses on ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable populations, including children, youth and women as well as physically challenged persons (Unimke, Orime, Alawa, et al., 2022). These programmes combined as at 2016 have supported more than 4 million beneficiaries' country-wide through a fair and transparent process supported by the Ministry of Budget and National Planning (MBNP) and other notable Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDA's) with aligned goals (Frank, Thomas, Ojong-Ejoha & Hussein, 2021).

The Federal Government has continued to implement the National Social Investment Programme, which N-Power is part of, on the directive of President then, Muhammadu Buhari. Ugo (2016) examines the effectiveness of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) to end poverty in Nigeria since the launch of the programme in 2016. The source reported that the N-power programme was designed to give assistant to young Nigerians between the ages of 18 to 35 as to acquire and develop life-long skills for becoming change makers in their communities and players in the domestic and global markets and with a monthly stipends of thirty thousand naira (N30,000) only and so, the need to investigate the success of the programme in Cross River State becomes apt.

### **Statement of the problem**

It is the right of citizens to live a decent life and it is the responsibility of any responsible government at all levels to provide comfortable environment for her citizen. In Nigeria for instance, one of the most important objectives of the Federal government and State governments is the eradication of poverty. These responsibilities can be provided in terms of provision of basic education, basic amenities, and health care facilities among others social and physiological needs of citizens. It is in this premise that during the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, the international community underscored the need to eradicate extreme poverty and gave its collective commitment to work towards this aim through education to give humans quality life irrespective of race and social status. However, Nigeria's in the recent past was still been described as the world poverty head quarter. Nigeria poverty index shows that most of her states have the largest percentage of people living below the poverty line in the world and Cross River State is not an exception. That statistic remains largely unchanged today as the National Bureau of Statistics' recent report, 40 percent of Nigerians live on N137, 000 annually, or N11, 414 monthly. That is far below the internationally acceptable poverty line of N277, 035 annually, or N23, 086 monthly (World Bank, 2021). However, gleaning from the experiences of other countries that have conquered poverty on a relative scale, the federal government of Nigeria under the then President Muhammadu Buhari launched the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP) to fight extreme poverty. This study therefore posed this question; does N-Power Programme reduce poverty among unemployed graduates in Cross River State, Nigeria?

### **Purpose of the study**

This study examines N-Power Programmes and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to: Determine relationship of N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates.

One research question was posed for the study, thus; what relationship has N-Power programme on poverty reduction among unemployed graduates? This research questioned was converted to one statement of hypothesis as stated below:

There is no significant relationship between N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates

The study is of great significant in many ways and to different categories of people like government, policy makers and researchers. The findings from this study assists the government and policy maker on how far the NSIP objectives have been achieved. The findings may also become the source of literature for others researchers. The government uses these findings to intensify her efforts towards ensuring that the programme impacts is felt among the vulnerable ones in the society. It further creates opportunity for the government to expand the scope of the programme by way of accommodating many Nigerians as many as possible. The policy makers can take advantage of the programme and initiate more policies that will improve the living standard of the people as to achieve social order in the society.

### **Conceptual framework of N-Power Programme**

The N-power programme is a programme initiated by the federal government of Nigeria during the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari to mitigate the effect of unemployment that has ravaged Nigeria over four decades. Abada (2022) sees N-power programme as a programme that will gradual lift Nigerians out of poverty and the category of health as one of the timely innovative idea and programme to tackle and prevent some dreaded diseases such as tuberculosis, chicken pot and others. Majority of the graduates that have been engaged in the education sector under N-power programme have contributed immensely in the impacting of knowledge to the learners in the teaching and learning encountered. This according to Patoshi (2020), helps to broaden the knowledge of the learner(s) at the primary and secondary school levels in different subjects and most importantly in the core areas like Mathematics, English and Social Studies.

The N-Power in the Agro-field, to some large extent has crated enough man power in the agricultural sector towards achieving food sufficient. Matakpa (2018) opines that N-power Agro was initiated in order for the Federal Government to add value to the vision of food sufficient in the country as well meeting the target of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). It has become obvious that within the period under review, graduates that were financially empowered with certain amount of money as the case may be have stepped up the agricultural products of the country which has increase country Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Asuda (2009) asserts that N-Tech as a sub unit of N-Power programme of the Buhari's administration has expended the Network profile of the country with a lot of graduate empowered with computers and other electronic gadgets for one business ventures or the other.

### **Empirical review of N-power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates**

The government created N-power plan as an integration initiative to give the majority of Nigerians opportunities for skill development. The government has launched this program to empower and create jobs for young people between the ages of 18 and 35 in order to foster a supportive atmosphere that might advance socioeconomic strata in different dimensions. Frank, Thomas, Ojong-Ejoha and Hussein (2021) carried out a study on Information on the impact of National N-Power Scheme on Employment Creation. The study attempts to provide valuable data on the impact of the National N-Power scheme on youth employment in Bekwara Local Government Area of Cross River State. The ex post facto research design was adopted in the collection of data from 398 samples from a population of 632 beneficiaries of the scheme using a self-structured questionnaire. The convenience sampling technique was used in selecting the samples from the study area. Data collected from the field was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics include frequency distribution, charts, simple per chart, means and standard deviation. The result from the descriptive statistics was then subjected to parametric statistics at 0.05 confidence level. Out of the 398-instrument distributed, only 389 was returned and used for analysis, from the analysis, it was discovered

that nearly all the respondents (96.92%) were unemployed before becoming beneficiaries of the N-Power Scheme. It was also discovered that out of all the programs registered under the scheme, only three programs had beneficiaries in Bekwara, these were N-Teach, N-Agro and N-Health. On this analysis carried out using lineal regression, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between N-Power and Employment Creation. Based on these findings the study recommends amongst others that there is a need for an increase in the number of beneficiaries of the Scheme in the Local Government Area.

Ifatimehin, Isyak, and Omale (2020) carried out a research on effect of N-Power scheme on youth empowerment in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. The study examines 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 and seminar reports. Descriptive and inferential statistics and One-Way ANOVA analysis were used for the data analysis and test of hypothesis. The study found out that N-Power scheme to some large extent empower 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.

Newman (2020) investigates the impact of N-Power programmes on poverty alleviation in Rivers State, Nigeria. Survey design was used in the study to generate data. The study population comprised the youth in all the twenty-three Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A sample of 400 respondents from the Rivers State youths was studied. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire administered, 387 copies were retrieved and after going through them 381 copies (i.e. 95.25% response rate) were found useful for data analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics used to analyze data in this study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (r) was used to test the hypotheses in this study. The study found that the major activities of N-Power programmes towards Poverty alleviation in Rivers State include: N-Power Teach, N-Power Build, N-Power Creative, N-Power Agro, N-Power Tech Software N-Power Tax, N-Power Health and N-Power Tech Hardware. The study found that N-Power programmes generate empowerment for the youths in Rivers State. The study revealed that N-Power Programmes' beneficiaries are mainly university and polytechnic graduates. The study found that the major factors affecting the implementation of N-Power programmes towards poverty alleviation in Rivers State include: Insufficient information, non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due, bribery and corruption, wrong bank verification number (BVN), overbearing hands of politicians in the programme, high transportation fare paid by the participants to work, website and internet hiccups, poor funding of the programme.

The study of Moham (2006), impact of n-power programme on the socioeconomic livelihoods of beneficiaries in Ibadan north local government area, Oyo state, Nigeria. The study was conducted to assess the impact of Npower scheme on the beneficiaries. The theoretical framework reviewed and adopted for the study is Structural functionalism. A total number of 250 Npower beneficiaries were selected through simple random sampling technique. The quantitative data collected through questionnaire, from 249 respondents, were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 25. It found out that the programme has had enormous impacts on the socio-economic livelihoods of the beneficiaries including easy access to basic and daily needs, catering for relatives, ability to enroll for further studies, etc. Findings revealed that delay in payments, lack of continuity, among others, were challenges

associated with the programme. Therefore, the study recommended continuity of the programme by successive governments, quick payments of monthly stipends, etc.

Adamu, Daura, Onuche and Rapheal (2020) carried out a study on the Prospects and Challenges of the Implementation of N-Power Graduate Scheme on Poverty Reduction among Beneficiaries in Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria. The study examines the prospects and challenges of the implementation of N-Power graduate scheme on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Maiduguri Urban centres. The methodology used is quantitative in nature using both primary and secondary sources of data, sampling 99 respondents from the population of 7,325 beneficiaries and convenient techniques was used to select respondents from the sample size. The study found that fund allocation, disbursement, application of information and communication technology and monitoring and evaluation has been very effective as a strategy adopted for the implementation of N-Power graduate scheme. The scheme has also recorded a significant prospects in uplifting the beneficiaries income, style of life, skills acquisitions and other benefit. The study also revealed that despite the prospects there are some challenges, which include delay in payment as well as inconsistent placement of enrolees among other problems. The study concluded that the Programme has recorded tremendous prospects in poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Maiduguri and further recommended that more effort should be made in monitoring and evaluation and government should disburse more fund for the implementation of the scheme among other recommendations. N-power as a component of National Social Investment Programme of the Buhari's administration becomes quite apt due to the economic hardship faced by Nigeria and the world at large. As at 2016, the programme was initiated to caution the effect of poverty and perhaps mitigate it to a bearer minimum bearing in mind its aftermath on Nigerian especially the vulnerable ones. The free flow of National Social Investment programme were part of Federal Government initiative of creating wealth for all by the year 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially the eight (8) goals which particularly anchored on the issues of poverty.

The programme vision was to eradicate poverty as part of Federal Government efforts to bring dividend of democracy closer to the people and was indeed timely to reduce unemployment rate, improve on school enrolment and eradicate poor feeding habit in our school system which demands that experience teachers should be deployed as fulcrum for the effectiveness of the programme (Unimke, Enu, Esu, 2019). The concept further unravels Federal Government and Buhar's administration strategies of making that Nigeria can access credit facilities from their bed rooms towards archiving self-reliance. The structuralism of the National Social Investment Programme had been applauded; hence, it has recorded 70% equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable homes in some part of the country and across the six-Geo- political zones of Nigeria. Records have proved beyond reasonable doubt that right from the inception of this programme in 2016, approximately 4 million people across the length and breadth of Nigerians have wildly benefited from the programme.

## Methodology

The research design used for this study was survey research design. This is because survey research design involves the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. Studies that make used this approach are employed to obtain a picture of the present conditions of particular phenomena and directed towards determining the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of investigation to facilitate interviews as means of data collection. The area covered in this study is Cross River State, Nigeria. This comprises 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state that are educationally mapped out into three zones. Cross River State is one of the thirty-six (36) states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The state has a population of 2,888,966 people (National Population Commission, 2006). It is

located in the South -South geopolitical zone of the country. Cross River State lies between longitudes 08<sup>0</sup>.00 East and 9<sup>0</sup>.25 East of the Greenwich Meridian, and 04<sup>0</sup>.00 North and 06<sup>0</sup>.45 North of the Equator (Department of Geography and Environmental Science, University of Calabar, 2018). The state is bounded in the North by Benue State, in the South by Akwa- Ibom State and Atlantic Ocean, in the East by the Republic of Cameroon and to the West by Ebonyi State and Akwa-Ibom State. Cross River State is made up of 18 local government areas namely; Abi, Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Bekwarra, Biase, Boki and Calabar Municipal Local Government Areas. Others include; Calabar South, Etung, Ikom, Obanliku, Obubra, Obudu, Odukpani, Ogoja, Yakurr and Yala.

The population of this study consists of all the 335 unemployed graduates who are beneficiary of the N- Power Programmes in Cross River State, Nigeria. This population is made up of both male and female unemployed graduate engaged in the entire Social Investment Programmes (SIP) in 2022 across different socio-economic background. A non-probability sampling technique involving the purposive and accidental sampling was adopted for this study. According to Joshua, Isangedighi, Asim and Ekuri (2004) purposive sampling technique is a means by which the researcher intentionally decides to use the sample for the study because of certain characteristics or elements. Here the researcher intentionally decided to use only unemployed graduates. The accidental sampling was adopted as researcher gave the instruments only to the unemployed graduates she met at the time of data collection. 10% of total population was selected for the study. In this method there is no provision for the estimation of the representativeness of the sample. This implies that sample consisted of three hundred and thirty-five (335) respondents which is 10% of the total population of the study. A breakdown of the figure shows presented in Table 1

**TABLE 1: Sample distribution**

Senatorial Zone	Gender		Total
	Males	Females	
South	59	60	119
Central	55	64	119
North	62	57	119
Total	176	181	335

### Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a 50 item structured questionnaire tagged “N-Power Programme and Poverty Reduction Questionnaire (NPPRQ). The items on the questionnaire were designed based on inputs from the review of related literature and contemporary issues surrounding then President Muhammadu Buhari’s Social Investment Programmes in poverty reduction among unemployed graduates in Cross River State, Nigeria. The instrument had two sections: section A and B. Section A was designed to obtain personal data of the respondents: gender, educational qualification, and parents’ socio-economic status, while section B had forty (40) items on a modified 4-point Likert scale that were designed to measure implementation of N-Power programmes. All items had four response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were encouraged to respond objectively based on their degree of agreement or disagreement on the attributes measured and the instrument was well validated by 3 experts with veteran experiences. In the procedure for data collection, instrument was administered to the respondents with the help of four research assistants trained specifically for the purpose of this research and the items on the questionnaire were sorted out according to the research variable meant to be measured.

## Presentation of result

The hypothesis is re-stated, and the result of data analysis carried out to test it is equally presented as it was tested at .05 level of significance; thus:

There is no significant relationship between N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates.

**TABLE 2: Simple regression result of the relationship between N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates**

Model	R	R. square	Adjusted R. Square	Std error of the estimate	
1	.933(a)	.871	.870	1.75829	
Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	p-value
Regression	6783.797	1	6783.797	2194.273	.000(a)
Residual	1007.859	326	3.092		
Total	7791.655	327			

\*Significant at .05 level.

The simple regression analysis of the relationship between N-Power programme on the poverty reduction among unemployed graduates yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of .933 and a multiple regression R-square ( $R^2$ ) of .871 and an adjusted  $R^2$  of .870. The adjusted  $R^2$  of .870 indicated that the N-Power programmes account for 8% of the determinant poverty reduction among unemployed graduates in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that N-Power programmes are relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F = 2194.273$  and the sig. value of .000 (or  $p < .05$ ) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 326. The implication of this result is that N-Power programme is a significant predictor of poverty reduction among unemployed graduates. The identified equation to understand this relationship was that Poverty reduction =  $6.165 + 1.328(\text{N-Power programme})$ .

## Discussion of findings

N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates. The result of this hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between N-Power programme and poverty reduction among unemployed graduates. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Ifatimehin, Isyak, and Omale (2020) who found out that N-Power scheme to some large extent has empowered the youths 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. Newman (2020) also found that the major activities of N-Power programmes towards Poverty alleviation in Rivers State include: N-Power Teach, N-Power Build, N-Power Creative, N-Power Agro, N-Power Tech Software N-Power Tax, N-Power Health and N-Power Tech Hardware. The study found that N-Power programmes generate empowerment for the youths in Rivers State. The study revealed that N-Power Programmes' beneficiaries are mainly University and polytechnic graduates. The study found that the major factors affecting the implementation of N-Power programmes towards poverty alleviation in Rivers State include: Insufficient information, non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due, bribery and corruption, wrong bank verification number (BVN), overbearing hands of politicians in the programme, high transportation fare paid by the participants to work, website and internet hiccups, poor funding of the programme.

Ahub and Gba (2020) also found out that the programme has had enormous impacts on the socio-economic livelihoods of the beneficiaries including easy access to basic and daily needs, catering for relatives, ability to enrol for further studies. Findings revealed that delay in payments, lack of continuity, among others, were challenges associated with the programme. Therefore, the study recommended continuity of the programme by successive governments and quick payments of monthly stipends,

Adamu, Daura, Onuche and Rapheal (2020) also found that fund allocation, disbursement, application of information and communication technology and monitoring and evaluation has been very effective as a strategy adopted for the implementation of N-Power graduate scheme. The scheme has also record a significant prospects in uplifting the beneficiaries income, style of life, skills acquisitions and other benefit. The study also revealed that despite the prospects there are some challenges, which include delay in payment as well as inconsistent placement of enrolees among other problems. The study concluded that the Programme has recorded tremendous prospects in poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Maiduguri and further recommended that more effort should be made in monitoring and evaluation and government should disburse more fund for the implementation of the scheme among other recommendations.

## Conclusion

The introduction of N-Power by the Federal Government at Buhari's administration was to drastically address the issue poverty that ravage the country for many decades due to obnoxious government policies and corruption that becomes the order of day in ministries, departments and agencies. The need for the government to address this ugly situation which forms part of societal social problems and issues led to the establishment of N-Power scheme as measure to mitigate poverty in the ambience of the country. The scheme has offered teaming youths the opportunity to be engaged in different fields of human endeavour while waiting for pensionable jobs. Majority of the youths have acquired creative skills that make them functional in a dynamic society and anti-egregious behaviour.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should increase the number of beneficiaries of the Scheme in all the 774 Local Government Areas in the country.
2. The government should provide mandatory training and workshops in the area of ICT and agriculture to enhance the beneficiaries' technical skills.
3. There should be continuity of the programme by successive governments and quick payments of monthly stipends,

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