
OSUN STATE, SOUTHWEST NIGERIA, 2016- 2023***¹Chisomaga Happiness, ²Samuel Omilabu**¹Rhema University Nigeria, Aba.²University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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ABSTRACT

Poverty and unemployment are twin evils bedeviling the Nigerian state today. Since 2018 Nigeria has been the headquarters of poverty in the world after overtaking India. The unemployment rate has risen from 14.2 in 2016 to 41 in the year 2023 respectively. This menace has given rise to social vices, such as vote buying, cybercrimes, prostitution, kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, political thuggery, and hooliganism in Nigeria. The Nigerian government have initiated several programmes to stem the rise of these problems, some of which include SURE-P, National Cash Transfer, Trader Moni and N-POWER social intervention programmes. N-POWER which is the focus of this study is part of the ongoing national social investment programme of the federal Government of Nigeria aimed specifically at job creation through human capital development and empowerment. Recent data has revealed that about 1,500,000 unemployed Nigerians have so far employed in the N-POWER programme between 2016 to 2023. This social programme was initiated by President Muhammed Buhari to curb the menace of unemployment in Nigeria between the ages of 18-35. Existing literature has fiercely criticised this programme but few have systematically looked at whether this programme has achieved its objective of meaningful youth empowerment and to know if this programme has created job opportunities in Osun State. Arising from the foregoing, the study assessed the N-POWER programme in Osun State between the periods of 2016- 2023. This was done using the following research questions: i. how has the N-POWER programme achieved its target of job creation in Osun State between 2016 and 2023? ii. how has N-POWER achieved its objective of how impactful the N-POWER programme has on the socioeconomic livelihood of the beneficiaries in Osun state between 2016 -2023? Systems theory was adopted for this study. The data for the study were generated through documentary and survey methods. The study found that this Government social intervention programme of N-POWER has not achieved its target of job creation nor has N-POWER been impactful on the socioeconomic livelihood of the beneficiaries in Osun State between the periods under study. It therefore recommended, among other things that the condition of service for N-POWER volunteers should be reviewed to boost their level of job motivation towards job efficiency and punctuality.

KEYWORDS: Federal Government Social Intervention Programme, Job Creation,

Systems theory, N-POWER, Osun State.

INTRODUCTION

Every nation of the world strives to develop its infrastructure, both human and material resources for the well-being of its people just like the concept of industrialization, democracy, development, employment and modernization.

Social intervention refers to government policies intended to reduce unemployment and poverty rates in a given country. Lack of job creation accounts for most of the social crimes perpetrated by graduates and non-graduates in Nigerian society today. The accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, oil bunkering, cyber-crimes, drug addiction, human trafficking, kidnapping and all forms of social vices can be largely attributed to the incidence of unemployment (Okeke and Ngonadi, 2017). An examination of most of the apprehended criminals seems to signify that a large number of Nigerian graduates that engaged in criminal activities are those without gainful employment.

Some of these criminals are individuals who have the potential to contribute positively to the nation's economy. But since the system deprives them of the much-needed opportunities, they resort to less honorable ways of *aching* out a living. The absence of job in Nigeria usually results to activities of miscreants such as militancy, like in the Niger Delta, communal crises, the deadly Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, incessant farmers-herders violence, political thuggery, banditry and trafficking, hence, upsetting the seemingly peaceful and stable socio-political situation (Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa, 2012).

Humanity from time immemorial has been sustained by the economic components of the society in which it exists. These economic components satiate the primary, secondary and tertiary needs of man when it is in adequate supply. But when the supply is short, the reverse becomes the case. In our today society, we notice that the human needs are to a large extent satisfied by earnings derived from many divergent sources such as entrepreneurship, empowerment and sometimes illegal and illicit means. It is in a bid to curtail and prohibit the indulgence of people in illicit means of earning a living that the government deems it fit to embark on social intervention programmes to economically empower the citizens with veritable sources of living especially through job creation. The implication of this mass unemployment in the Nigerian society is not farfetched as it is nothing but poverty which is a negative force that drives people into illegal ventures to earn and sustain their living. As a matter of fact, the world poverty clock in 2018 stated that Nigeria assumed the ignoble position of being the poverty capital of the world after overtaking India, with about 86.9 million of her population in extreme poverty (Vanguard, 2019). To corroborate this assertion, the National Bureau of Statistics in the 2012 National Baseline Survey, stated that more than half of the Nigerian youth's population in the country are unemployed.

Job creation in Nigeria is a responsibility of both the private and public sectors of any

economy. However, it is worthy to note that it is a more integral duty of the government forming part of their constitutional obligations to the citizens (FRN Constitution, 1999). Job creation which entails the creation or establishment of new jobs in such a way that no economic activity is displaced undoubtedly is a means through which the government of the federation intervenes in the socio-economic plights of its citizens. Onuoha and Woghiren (2019) noted that with the worrisome nature of unemployment in Nigerian society, the government of Nigeria has been seen putting up many different policy measures over the years to reverse this unwanted societal phenomenon.

Poverty and unemployment are significant challenges facing Nigeria today. Since 2018, Nigeria has held the unfortunate title of being the global headquarters of poverty, surpassing India. The unemployment rate has surged from 14.2% in 2016 to 33.28% in 2020. This surge has led to the proliferation of social ills, including cybercrimes (such as yahoo yahoo), prostitution, kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, political thuggery, and hooliganism. The Nigerian government has introduced various programs to address these social issues, including SURE-P, National Cash Transfer, and the N-POWER social intervention program.

Nigeria has long grappled with underdevelopment, resulting in challenges such as job scarcity, lack of empowerment, social insecurity, and increased social vices. This can be attributed to factors like mismanagement of resources, indiscipline, and a lack of political will dating back to post-independence Nigeria. Rather than prioritizing development and poverty alleviation, policymakers and politicians seem to have turned leadership positions into avenues for corruption, embezzlement, and neglecting the needs of the populace. Poverty and unemployment persist as the most pressing social problems in Nigeria. The dearth of job opportunities and social intervention programs for Nigerian youths has led to a situation where many graduates and school leavers wander the streets in search of elusive employment opportunities.

Even in developed nations, social issues like unemployment persist, as noted by Longe (2017). In Africa, the average unemployment rates are notably high, as highlighted by Alawade (2010) citing rates in South Africa, Botswana, and Angola. Unemployment fueling poverty remains a significant concern in the Southwest region and Nigeria as a whole. Reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicate a steady increase in poverty from 17.7 million in 1988 to 66.7 million in 2004. Nigeria's poverty status worsened in 2018 when it surpassed India to become the world's poverty capital, with around 86.9 million people living in extreme poverty. Data from NBS (2010) reveals that over half of Nigeria's population currently lives in poverty, demanding urgent national attention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In economic history, no country faces a more critical choice than implementing social investment programs for productive youth and job creation. The term social intervention lacks a universal definition, being approached from various perspectives. As per Bonnie (2006), it involves actions by the government, social agencies, and

volunteers to enhance social conditions, strengthen bonds, and promote social control. While this definition focuses on sociological aspects, Badu (2018) defines it as providing effective means to address social and economic challenges. In this discussion, social intervention refers to deliberate efforts by individuals or institutions, including governments, to solve social issues. Various administrations have introduced social intervention programs to tackle job creation concerns, dating back to the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) era. Initiatives like Poverty Alleviation Programs, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), and N-POWER aim to provide job opportunities for Nigerian youths.

In Nigeria, poverty is closely linked to unemployment, making government Social Intervention Programs crucial for job creation and youth empowerment. These schemes, funded and executed by governments, international agencies, and private sectors, have been a recurring feature in Nigeria's governance. Notable youth intervention programs have been implemented since independence in 1960, focusing on social investments for the youth. These initiatives aim to improve infrastructure, diversify the economy, reduce unemployment, and elevate living standards. NAPEP, for instance, emphasizes poverty eradication through effective evaluation and monitoring of its projects' impact on communities across Nigeria.

In 2004, President Olusegun Obasanjo's government launched the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) at the federal, state, and local levels to coordinate empowerment activities. Similarly, the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P) was initiated to address unemployment, particularly among graduates. The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) under SURE-P aims to reduce unemployment by providing graduates with work experience and skills relevant to their field, enhancing their employability in Nigeria's competitive job market.

The Nigerian Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) is one of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) under the Office of Vice President Yemi Osinbajo. In it, non-collateral soft loans are given to traders, artisans and farmers for purposes of enhancing their living standards by expanding their businesses through funding by Bank of Industry (BoI). Under GEEP are three sub-programmes: Trader moni, Market Moni and Farmer Moni, where zero collateral loans, ranging from N10, 000 to N300, 000 are given to MSMEs operators, as part of poverty eradication efforts (Obadan, 2019). The focus is to provide our young graduates and non-graduates with the skills, tools and livelihood to enable them advance from unemployment to empowerment, entrepreneurship and innovation. In a bid to reduce poverty, Nigeria has adopted several policies in the past; some have been successful, but the overall idea has not been sustainable as poverty at 33.1 percent remains a big challenge in the country. Nigeria through its Bank of Industry (BoI) and Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) launched Trader-Moni as an empowerment programme to enable petty traders to boost their businesses. The scheme grants these traders access to loans starting from N10, 000 (\$27.7). According to the Nigerian

government, the Trader Moni which aims at empowering 2 million Nigerians would further enlarge the financial inclusion agenda for all Nigerians regardless of social class and economic status (Aderonmu, 2018).

According to Longe (2017) even the most developed nations have not shown exception to these frightful social problems. In Africa, however, the average unemployment rate is generally high as corroborated by Alawade (2010) when he posited that, unemployment in South Africa, Botswana and Angola was 21%, 17.5% and 25% respectively. According to the NBS (2010), Nigeria has one of the highest national unemployment rates in sub-Sahara Africa between 2000 and 2009. In its report, it's asserted that unemployed persons constituted 13.6% in 2001, 12.6% in 2002, 13.4% in 2003, 13/7% 2006, 14.9% in 2008 of the population and 19.7% 2009 respectively. The figures above shows that 2000 - 2010 witness a vertical climb of unemployment rate in the country. Latest findings from the National Bureau of Statistic (NBS) depicts that Since 2018 Nigeria has been the headquarters of poverty in the world after overtaken India. The unemployment rate has risen from 14.2 in 2016 to 33.28 in the year 2020 respectively. This has given rise to social vices, such as cybercrimes, prostitution, kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, political thuggery, and hooliganism in Southwest Nigeria, and Nigeria at large.

Salami (2013) identify and enumerated five major factors viz; structural, cultural, lack of political will, skewed Budgetary allocation and poorly coordinated intervention programmes. He further contends that the structural factors consist of the inadequacies in the current educational policies while the cultural factor has to do with get rich quick syndrome which discourages hard work and meritocracy. Salami (2013) postulation that, "most intervention programmes have been poorly coordinated and, in some cases, either overlap or contradicts one another." indeed, it has been observed that most of these empowerment mitigation measures have been implemented on an interim bases or have been abused by it handlers by making good with its proceeds and where implemented are marred by inefficiency

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted systems theory as a basis of analysis. The study adopted documentary and interview methods. Documentary data collection is a tool used to obtain information from secondary sources. This method involves eliciting information contained in the works of authors both published and unpublished, Journals, and Government Publications, among others while information as regards this study was generated from the young people between age 18 and 35 via the use of a questionnaire. Analysis of data so generated was done using content analysis. A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study through the use of questionnaire which enabled the researcher to collect and analyze data from a sample of the entire population without any form of manipulation. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique to select 300 respondents who doubled as beneficiaries of the programme. The technique was employed to ensure that only those who fell into the population category were selected. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive method of data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical verification of the hypothesis which states that, the federal government's social intervention programme of N-POWER has not been able to achieve its target of job creation in Osun State between 2016-2023, and also the N-POWER category have not achieved its objective in achieving youth empowerment in the state between 2016-2023 was carried out using the combination of the various units of analysis inherent in the major indicators.

Table 1: Ground Total of N-POWER Beneficiaries in Nigeria between 2016-2023.

YEAR	NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED
2016 (BATCH A)	200,000
2018 (BATCH B)	300,000
2020 (BATCH C STREAM 1)	500,000
2022 (BATCH C STREAM 2)	500,000
GRAND TOTAL	1,500,000

Data Source: N-Power Information Guide 2023

Table 2: Total Number of N-POWER Beneficiaries for Batch A (2016), Batch B (2018) Batch C1 (2020) & Batch C2 (2022) in Osun State, Nigeria.

Batches	Year	NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED
Batch A	2016	3,165 out of 200,000
Batch B	2018	7,709 out of 300,000
Batch C1	2020	11,347 out of 500,000
Batch C2	2022	5,977 out of 500,000
TOTAL		28,198 out of 1,500,000

Data Source: Office of the Osun State N-POWER Vocal Person (National Social Investment Programme Department, Governor's Office), Osun, 2023

Table 3: Breakdown of N-POWER Batch A (2016) Beneficiaries in Osun State.

N-POWER CATEGORIES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED UNDER EACH CATEGORY
N-POWER Agro	317
N-POWER Health	530
N-POWER Teach	2,318
N-POWER Build	NIL
N-POWER Tech	NIL
N-POWER- Tax	NLL
GRAND TOTAL	3,165

Data Source: Office of the Osun State N-POWER Vocal Person (National Social Investment Programme Department, Governor's Office), Oshogbo Osun, 2023

Table 4: Breakdown of N-POWER Batch B (2018) Beneficiaries in Osun State.

N-POWER CATEGORIES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED UNDER EACH CATEGORY
N-POWER Agro	835
N-POWER Health	2,462
N-POWER Teach	4,412
N-POWER Build	NIL
N-POWER Tech	NIL
N-POWER- Tax	NIL
GRAND TOTAL	7,709

Data Source: Office of the Osun State N-POWER Vocal Person (National Social Investment Programme Department, Governor's Office), Osun, 2023.

Table 5: Breakdown of N-POWER Batch C1 (2020) Beneficiaries in Osun State.

N-POWER CATEGORIES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED UNDER EACH CATEGORY
<i>N-POWER Agro</i>	<i>1,110</i>
<i>N-POWER Health</i>	<i>3,462</i>
<i>N-POWER Teach</i>	<i>6,412</i>
<i>N-POWER Build</i>	<i>363</i>
<i>N-POWER Tech</i>	<i>NIL</i>
<i>N-POWER- Tax</i>	<i>NIL</i>
GRAND TOTAL	11,347

Data Source: Office of the Osun State N-POWER Vocal Person (National Social Investment Programme Department, Governor's Office), Osun, 2023.

Table 6: Breakdown of N-POWER Batch C2 (2022) Beneficiaries in Osun State.

N-POWER CATEGORIES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED UNDER EACH CATEGORY
<i>N-POWER Agro</i>	<i>950</i>
<i>N-POWER Health</i>	<i>1,055</i>
<i>N-POWER Teach</i>	<i>2,412</i>
<i>N-POWER Build</i>	<i>879</i>
<i>N-POWER Tech</i>	<i>681</i>
<i>N-POWER- Tax</i>	<i>NIL</i>
GRAND TOTAL	5,977

Data Source: Office of the Osun State N-POWER Vocal Person (National Social Investment Programme Department, Governor's Office), Osun, 2023.

PRESENTATION OF DATA ANALYSIS**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.**

Sex	Male	Female	Total		
Frequency/Percentage	175(58%)	125(42%)	300(100.0)		
Age	18-23	24-29	30-35	Total.	
Frequency/Percentage	35(11%)	107(37 %)	158(52%)	300(100.0)	
Marital Status	Single	Married	Separated	Widowed	Total
Frequency/Percentage	248(83%)	52(17%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	300(100. 0)
Number of Children	No child	1-3	4-6	7 above	Total
Frequency/Percentage	201(81%)	43(17%)	4(2%)	1(0%)	300(100.0)
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	Islam	Total		
Frequency/Percentage	146(59%)	103(41%)	300(100.0)		
Other Engagements	None	Trading	Artisanship	Contract Staff	Total
Frequency/Percentage	67(27%)	124(50 %)	32(13%)	26(10%)	300(100.0)

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 2: Frequencies (Freq) and Percentages (%) of employees of N-POWER beneficiaries in Osun State between 2016-2023.

Areas of Employment	N-POWER 2016		N-POWER 2018		N-POWER 2020		N-POWER 2022		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
N-POWER Agro	317	10.02	835	10.83	1,110	9.78	950	15.90	3,212	11.40
N-POWER Health	530	16.75	2,462	31.94	3,462	30.51	1,055	17.65	7,509	26.63
N-POWER Teach	2,318	73.23	4,412	57.23	6,412	56.51	2,411	40.35	15,553	55.16
N-POWER Build	0	0	0	0	363	3.20	879	14.70	1,242	4.40
N-POWER Tech	0	0	0	0	0		681	11.40	681	2.41
N-POWER Tax	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
Total	3,165	100:00	7,709	100:00	11,347	100:00	5,977	100.00	28,197	100:00

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 2: Presents information on the impact of the N-POWER programme by the federal government of Nigeria in addressing the unemployment situation in Osun state from 2016 to 2023. From the result, a total of 3,165 persons were employed through the N-POWER programme in the state in 2016 while in 2018, 7,709 persons were recruited, also in the year 2020, 11,347 and finally, 5,977 persons were employed to the N-POWER programme in the year 2022. In total, from 2016 to 2023, only 28,197 persons were recruited in Osun state.

Although this number has an impact on the unemployment situation in the state, the impact seems minimal and insignificant. Specifically, statistics show that the estimated population of Osun State in 2022 was 4,435,800 while the unemployment rate in 2022 was 37.28. Also, the job created by the programme was by far lower than the NBS projection for the state to tackle unemployment which requires an average yearly provision of 116,756 jobs for her citizens. This implies that the number of people who secured jobs in the N-POWER programme has no significant impact on the ravaging unemployment situation in Osun state.

Table 2 shows respondents' socio-demographic data. Regarding the sex of respondents, 58% were males while 42% were females. This implies that the number of males that participated in this study was more than the female counterpart even though the latter respondents were also significant. This, therefore, means that male respondents participated and contributed more to the study than their female counterparts. The reason for this might mean that more male beneficiaries were selected, present and ready to participate in the study than the female counterparts. Age distribution of respondents shows that 6% respondents were from 18-23 years, 64% from 24-29 years, while 30% were from 30-35 years. This implies that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 24-29 which directly signifies that the target of the programme were youths. Also, this corroborates the age at which a student is expected to graduate within the context of Nigeria and reflects that most of the beneficiaries have not really spent lengthy years at home without jobs before being engaged by the federal government. The marital status of respondents reveals that 79% were single, 21% were married, while none was divorced, separated and widowed. This, therefore, means that majority of the respondents who participated in this study were single which may be in connection with the fact that they were young graduates who were still looking for greener pastures. More so, the marital status of the majority of the respondents may also have an association with the age brackets of most of the respondents who participated in the study.

The religious affiliations of respondents indicate that 59% were Christians while 41% were Muslims. This indicates that both major religions were adequately represented in the programme and in the study, although, the former were higher in number than the latter. It was revealed in this study that beneficiaries had the opportunities to engage in other activities to improve their skills and to become employable ranging from trading (50%), and artisanship (13%), to being contract staff (10%), (27%) were not involved in any occupational activities apart from the empowerment scheme. This shows how lenient and simple the scheme is, giving room for personal improvement.

Table 3: To determine how impactful the N-POWER programme has on the socioeconomic livelihoods of the beneficiaries in Osun state between 2016-2023.

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage
To what extent are you capable of attending to your daily needs without difficulty?	Very Capable	150	50
	Fairly Capable	95	32
	Incapable	55	18
	Total	300	100
How much are you able to cater for the needs of your family members through the stipends collected?	Very Easy	132	44
	Fairly Easy	138	46
	Not Easy	30	10
	Total	300	100
Have you been able to further your studies through the stipends given?	Yes, I have finished	48	16
	Yes, I am still on it	61	20
	No, I am still planning it	150	50
	No, the stipends are insufficient	30	10
	No Response	11	4
	Total	300	100
Can you call yourself an achiever for being a beneficiary of Npower programme?	Yes	222	74
	No	49	16
	No Response	29	10
	Total	300	100
To what extent has the programme reduced the rate of Graduate unemployment in the state?	Highly reduced	129	43
	Fairly Reduced	115	38
	Not Reduced	56	19
	Total	300	100
Has the implementation of the programme increased the level of literacy in the state?	Yes	184	61
	No	92	31
	No response	24	8
	Total	300	100
What is the level of the programme's contribution to the provision of food security/surplus?	High	94	31
	Medium	128	43
	Low	78	26
	Total	300	100

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 3 reveals how the programme has had impacts on the empowerment of the beneficiaries. 50% respondents claimed that their inclusion in the scheme has enabled them to cater for their daily needs without difficulty as against 13%. This explicates that the scheme has been helpful and elevated the beneficiaries from the poverty line,

enabled them to eat at least three-square meals, buy and pay for essential things. The responses of 41% affirm that it was very easy to cater for the needs of the family members through the stipends collected, while 50% conceived it to be fairly easy, however, 14% had found it uneasy. This implies that majority of the beneficiaries of the scheme in the study area were able to attend to their family members' needs including economic, social and psychological. This probably also means that their selection has made them responsible in feeding the family members and paying the school fees of their children (among the married ones). The monthly stipends paid to the beneficiaries were used to uplift status, including studying further. In corroboration, 60% respondents agreed to have a plan in studying further from the stipends received, 8% already had finished further studies including Post-Graduate Diploma in Education for the HND beneficiaries, MSc and other academic programmes, while 20% were still in the process of programme completion. A relatively few respondents constituting 10% claimed that the stipends were insufficient to start any educational programmes.

This strengthens the findings that the work done is not commensurate to the pay and requires that the government increase the pay to enable beneficiaries to attend to other basic and important needs. However, the fact that the majority had the plans to go further in their studies with the meagre stipends shows that it was helpful and has enabled beneficiaries to progress beyond imagination. Table 3 also reveals that 89% respondents considered themselves achievers for the positive impact of the scheme. The views of the respondents show that Npower has had an enormous impact on their socioeconomic livelihoods. This also implies that the scheme has not only empower the beneficiaries but also their relatives through the provision of daily needs as well as starting businesses, paying school fees of children, renting apartments for self-comfort, buying clothes and other essentials without difficulty. Based on this finding, 52% claimed that the scheme has highly reduced the rate of graduate unemployment in the study area, as against 34% who felt the reduction was only fair, although, 14% observed no difference in the implementation of the programme and decrease in graduate unemployment. It can be concluded that Npower programme is relatively an antidote for graduate unemployment.

The empowerment of the beneficiaries through starting up of businesses and skills acquisition, would make them get engaged meaningfully in the development of their communities and develop favourable attitudes to any efforts to avert criminal tendency by countering the common saying, "an idle hand is devil's workshop". Additionally, the views of 74% indicate that the programme has contributed to an increased level of literacy in the study area through the N-Teach arm. This is probably due to the teaching of students most especially the primary school pupils on how to read and write furthermore, it implies that the N-teach arm has served as an added advantage to the educational system of the state through increase in teaching manpower. Also, level of the programme's contribution to the provision of food security/surplus was noted by the views of 26% (high), 51% (medium) and 23% (low) respondents respectively through the N-Agro. The views of the majority show that the involvement of the beneficiaries in the agricultural arm of the programme would

facilitate interaction between the beneficiaries and farmers on how to boost their farm produce as well as acquire skills that will ultimately lead to business start-ups. This implies that the continuity of the programme and the inclusion of a high number of Nigerians will help to sustain the development goals and contribute to the educational and socio-economic development of Nigeria as a country.

Table 4: Challenges Associated with the Implementation of the Npower Programme.

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Are the stipends given commensurate to the work expected?	Highly Commensurate	150	50
	Poorly Commensurate	95	32
	Not commensurate	55	18
	Total	300	100
Do you have fear over the continuity of the programme after the administration of President Muhammad Buhari?	Yes	114	38
	No	134	45
	No Response	52	17
	Total	300	100
To what extent is the programme supervised?	Well supervised	104	35
	Poorly supervised	168	56
	No Idea	28	9
	Total	300	100
How is the corruption level among the officials of the programme?	None	43	14
	High	131	44
	Moderate	79	26
	Low	47	16
	Total	300	100
What is the rate of political interference in the selection of beneficiaries?	No Interference	41	14
	Yes, and High	129	43
	Yes, but Medium	85	28
	Yes, but Low	45	15
	Total	300	100
Do you think the beneficiaries are the true targets (unemployed/vulnerable youths) of the programme as projected?	Yes	184	61
	No	92	31
	No response	24	8
	Total	300	100
Do you experience any delay in terms of the payment of the monthly stipends?	Yes	300	100
	No	0	0
	No Response	0	0
	Total	300	100

Source: Survey, 2024.

Table 4 shows the challenges associated with the N-power scheme which similarly affect the experience of the beneficiaries in the discharge of their responsibilities. Respondents averred that the stipends given were not commensurate to the work done. This may be due to a hike in transport fare; poor payment compared to other

employed graduates in sectors like NNPC, FIRSC, CBN, etc.; multiple roles played by beneficiaries; and high handedness surrounding bureaucratic organizations which are new to those who have not been fully employed. In line with this, 86% affirmed that they griped with fears over lack of continuity of the scheme after the expiration of President Muhammad Buhari's administration. This is also affirmed by the ongoing rumors of the termination of the appointment of the 2016 batch of the scheme which has been daily reported on local newspapers and online media platforms. Table 3 also revealed that the programmes was poorly supervised by the views of 67% respondents, even though 30% claimed it was well supervised.

This is in tandem with truancy, irregularity as well as nonchalant attitudes towards work which sometimes were exhibited by some beneficiaries without any query or punishment from the officials of the scheme. Another justification to this, is the multiple workings of beneficiaries in different places at the same time including Federal, State and Local Government parastatals as well as Non-Governmental Organizations. This is also affirmed by 53% who observed that corruption among the officials was high, 32% claimed it was moderate while 10% agreed it was low. This implies that corruption among the officials of the scheme has compounded the challenges experienced by the beneficiaries which if not controlled could make it difficult to sufficiently meet the target of the scheme and achieve its goals. The corruption may appear in forms of bribery, selecting already employed youths as against vulnerable ones, demanding unnecessary dues from the beneficiaries, among others. Table 3 shows that the selection of beneficiaries has a little political influence. Based on this assertion, 51% respondents agreed that there was political interference but very low compared to 14% who totally disagreed. This may be in line with the selection of some beneficiaries based on the assumption that some percentage might have been allotted to the political office holders. Political interference was also observed by 9% and 26% of respondents who considered it high and medium respectively. This implies that the level of political interference was relatively low and could mean that the scheme was for all and sundry without recourse to political relationship, participation or affiliation.

Again, 97% agreed that they have experienced delays in the payments of the monthly stipends which may probably be linked to technical issues, poor management, unperturbed attitudes towards the welfare of the beneficiaries, etc. The last question on the table asked if the beneficiaries were the true targets (unemployed/vulnerable youths) of the programme as projected, 55% said yes, 36% said no while 9% said no idea. This means that the majority of the selected beneficiaries reflected the true targets of unemployed youth, however, responses from a few of them showed that some employed and unqualified individuals, who might be their colleagues, families and friends, also got selected. This implies that the selected beneficiaries of the programme were not critically examined to differentiate between unemployed and employed. This may limit the chance of qualified applicants and void the selection processes and targets.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development. Despite the current high level of youth unemployment and other social problems, affecting Nigerian development, different regimes of Nigerian governments have demonstrated the import of the youth to national development through empowerment programmes. Large-scale skill development is the main policy thrust of the N-Power Programme. N-Power is a Federal Government policy in the economic, employment and social development arenas established to address 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. The programme is an inclusive one which gives opportunities to both men and women. It is also not limited to the educated elites, by absorbing even the nonliterate for the growth of Nigerians and the Nigerian economy. It has to some extent, impacted on the socioeconomic lives of the beneficiaries in the study area, by providing a great significant number of them adequate skills and training.

It provides various forms of assistance apart from loans which need to be reviewed. The beneficiaries, to a very large extent, were not satisfied with the monthly stipends given probably due to the expenses incurred for transport and other responsibilities. While the youths get empowered through the programme, they are likely to establish businesses capable of generating employment for others, thereby, decreasing the rate of unemployment and other social problems in the study area. With this said, the impact can also be extended to Nigeria, through growth in GDP, economic boost, provision of food security, which may ultimately result in the development the country as well. Based on the major findings of the study, the programme is associated with challenges including low and the delay of the monthly stipends, fear over the continuity of the programme after the administration of President Muhammad Buhari, poor supervision from the officials, high corruption level among the officials, hence, the following policy recommendations are hereby put forward;

1. The programme should be sustained and continued by the successive government in order to take several youths out of poverty.
2. Well-trained computer experts, working with other relevant stakeholders, should be employed to avert the problem of payments delay to beneficiaries. iii.
3. New minimum wage reflects in the stipends given to the beneficiaries in order to successfully carry out their duties with commitment and diligence.
4. More efforts should be intensified by the officials of the programme to maintain transparency and corruption-free of the programme and should not be used to settle political party thugs and hirelings.

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