SOCIAL INVESTMENT SCHEME (N-POWER) AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN KANO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between N-Power program and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis. This study adopted both case study design and casual design. The study population included a total of 5,435 beneficiaries from eight (8) selected local governments of Kano Metropolis. The sample size of 222 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table. Questionnaire was the main research instrument adopted for this study. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the relationship between the study variables. The study found that there is a positive and significant relationship between N-Power Program and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis (r =.488[**], p = 0.000). The study recommended that there should be enough funds to finance N-Power activities, federal government should increase the number of beneficiaries, and that the federal government should empower the local governments to perform the role of evaluating and monitoring the beneficiaries in their primary areas of assignment.

Keywords: Social Investment Scheme, N-Power, Poverty Reduction, Kano State

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Social Investments Programs (NSIP) in 2016, to tackle poverty and hunger across the country. The suite of programs under the NSIP focused on ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable populations, including children, youth and women (Ogunmodede, et al. 2020).The N-Power Program, under the National Social Investment Scheme is the Federal Government of Nigeria's direct intervention to tackle youth unemployment and re-energize public service delivery in four key sectors (i.e. education, agriculture, health, and vocation training). The N-Power program was envisioned to be beneficial to all youth segments within the Federal Government of Nigeria (Odey, et al. 2019). The goal of the program was to intervene and directly improve the livelihood of a critical mass of young unemployed Nigerians, to develop a qualitative system for the transfer of employability, entrepreneurial and technical skills, to create an ecosystem of solutions for ailing public services and government diversification policies, and to develop and enhance Nigeria's knowledge economy (Nwaobi, 2019; Okonkwo, et al. 2021). Through deliberate training

and skill building, the employability of the work force is improved such that upon completing their 12-month program engagement, they can take on more professional jobs or follow the entrepreneurial path (Olorunsola, 2022).

Although, the federal government of Nigeria has performed a pivotal role in pioneering the fight against poverty in the country through the N-Power scheme, poverty still remains a major menace in the country (*Imouokhome, 2023*).More relatable is the scourge of unemployment which has accounted for the rising poverty levels in Nigeria. With the youth unable to find gainful employment, there are reduced income levels, low investments, and dwindled standard of living (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Typically, underemployment has been a bane in the Nigerian economy as wages are not in tandem with years of experience and skills. Corruption is also a key influence for reduced poverty in recent years as resources meant for development are embezzled and diverted away from productive uses where they would have in fact benefited the economy and the people (*Imouokhome, 2023).*

Statement of the problem

The unemployment in Nigeria is rising at alarming rate, inducing increase in criminality and insecurity. According to Egole (2023), there was an increase in the national unemployment rate from 23.1per cent in 2018 to 33.3per cent in 2020, and this rate increased to 37.7per cent in 2022 and further to 40.6 per cent in 2023. Subsequently, unemployment has led to the increase in the number of poor people in Nigeria. The report by National Bureau of Statistics (2022) indicated that 40.1% of people are poor, and 63% are multi-dimensionally poor. In 2020, the World Bank using a benchmarked poverty threshold of $3.20 per day put Nigeria's poverty rate at 71 per cent (Izuaka, 2022). According to Nwafor (2023)**, some of the daunting reasons for high poverty rate in Nigeria is attributed to u**nemployment, corruption, non-diversification of the economy, income inequality, laziness, and a poor education system. However, N-power as a National Social Investment Program was initiated with specifics on poverty reduction through job creation, youth empowerment and human capital development. Nevertheless, the N-Power program is lacking comprehensive and synchronized policy which has led to poor implementation in Kano Metropolis. Thus this study investigated to establish the relationship between N-Power program and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis.

Objectives of the study

- To determine the relationship between social investment scheme (N-Power), and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis.

Research Hypothesis

- There is no significant relationship between social investment scheme (N-Power), and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Investment Scheme (N-Power)

The N-Power is a youth empowerment scheme set up by the Nigerian president, Muhammadu Buhari on the 8th of June 2016 (Onah & Ugwuibe, 2022; Maduabuchi, 2023). The scheme was established to address the issue of youth unemployment and alleviate poverty in Nigeria. Designed for Nigerian citizens between the ages of 18 and 35, it provides for large-scale work skills acquisition and development (Umearokwu & Ilias, 2022). Simultaneously, it is linked to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the economy of Nigeria. N-Power, a component of the National Social Investment Program, ensures participants learn what is necessary to find work (Efayena & Buzugbe, 2020).The scheme currently has six categories namely; N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Build, N-Creative and N-Tech. N-Teach and N-Health are available to only graduates who must have completed the mandatory one year NYSC program, while N-Agro, N-Build, N-Creative and N-Tech is available to graduates and non-graduates (Onah & Ugwuibe, 2022).

N-Teach: Volunteers under this program stream help improve basic education delivery in Nigeria. These volunteers function as support teachers across public primary schools in Nigeria. They are provided with content on the curriculum to help them learn and deliver to the students. They are then deployed as teaching assistants to primary schools in their localities to support and complement teachers in these schools. The N-Teach program lasts for a year and each beneficiary is entitled to ₦30,000 ($40) monthly stipend for work done (Odey, et al. 2019).

N-Health: Through the N-Power Health program, young graduates are trained to work as support health assistants. They are also trained to provide communication and advocacy services to the patients as the health centers. These volunteers function as volunteer health assistants across Nigeria. The N-Health program lasts for a year and each beneficiary is entitled to ₦30,000 ($40) monthly stipend for work done (Auta, et al. 2020).

N-Agro: N-Agro volunteers function as intermediaries to help stimulate the agriculture value chain. They are primarily deployed to farms across the country and their core responsibility is to support farmers with the necessary information and resources needed to help them achieve the best yield and output. The N-Agro program trains young graduates and gives them content across different farming modules to enable them prepare for the role of an agricultural extension officer. The N-Agro program lasts for a year and each beneficiary is entitled to ₦30,000 ($40) monthly stipend for work done (Ogunmodede, et al. 2020).

Poverty Reduction

The World Bank defines poverty in terms of poverty lines that are based on estimates of the cost of goods and services needed to meet the basic subsistence needs. Thus, the poor are regarded as those whose income is at or below specific poverty lines. The most commonly used international poverty line is $1.90 per day (Ferreira, et al., 2016; World

Bank, 2018). A concept that is closely related to the poverty line is the head count index which is the proportion of the population below the poverty line. The existence of extreme poverty in several developing countries is a critical challenge that needs to be addressed urgently because of its adverse implications on human wellbeing. Its manifestations include lack of adequate food and nutrition, lack of access to adequate shelter, lack of access to safe drinking water, low literacy rates, high infant and maternal mortality, high rates of unemployment, and a feeling of vulnerability and disempowerment (Ayoo, 2022).

However, poverty reduction can be attained by stimulating economic growth to increase incomes and expand employment opportunities for the poor; undertaking economic and institutional reforms to enhance efficiency and improve the utilization of resources; prioritizing the basic needs of the poor in national development policies; promoting microfinance programs to remove constraints to innovation, entrepreneurship, and small scale business; developing and improving marketing systems to improve production; providing incentives to the private sector; and, implementing affirmative action such as targeted cash transfers to ensure that the social and economic benefits of poverty reduction initiatives reach the demographics that might otherwise be excluded (Shabbir, et al. 2019; Singh & Chudasama, 2020).

Theoretical Review

This study adopted the structural theory of poverty. To the structural theorists, poverty is due to the structure of the larger socioeconomic order (Abdulai, et al. 2014). Those who believe in this theory attribute the source of poverty to economic, political, and social system which causes people to have limited opportunities and resources with which to achieve income and well-being (Addae-Korankye, 2019). The same view is expressed by Samati et, al. (2012) who believe that larger economic and social structures is a cause of poverty. They argue that capitalism creates conditions that promote poverty, and that irrespective of individuals' effort (i.e. hard work, skills and competencies), the structure of some economies such as that of Nigeria ensures that millions of people are poor. In other words a greater number of literatures suggest that the economic system is structured in such a way that the poor fall behind regardless of how competent they may be (Bradshaw, 2007). The theory also asserts that within a market-based competitive economic system, unequal initial endowments of talents, skills and capital which determine productivity of individual cause poverty (Davis, 2014).

According to Dube (2019), certain positions in society require special and at times unique talents, skills and knowledge. They further argue that conversion of one's talent into such special skills and knowledge requires a training period during which the individuals undergoing such training must sacrifice their time, money and other resources. People should therefore be motivated accordingly to sacrifice to undergo such training with reward such as higher wages and privileges as promoted by the N-power program in Nigeria.

The Relationship between Social Investment Scheme (N-Power) and Poverty Reduction in Kano Metropolis

Adi, et al. (2022) conducted a study on impact of N-power program on poverty alleviation among youths in Taraba state, Nigeria. The study was targeted on three (3) component of N-power program namely: N-Teach, N-Health and N-Agro respectively. Data were collected from 90 randomly selected respondents using structural questionnaire and the data were analyzed using frequency, percentage and t-test analysis. The result on t-test analysis revealed that the N-power program have alleviated poverty among the youths in the study Area. Furthermore, Onah and Ugwuibe (2022) assessed the implementation of N-Power programs in Enugu, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. Findings include that N-Power programs were poorly implemented in Enugu State. Additionally, that N-Power program has no significant impact on the reduction of poverty among the youths in Enugu State.

Bello, et al., (2022) assessed the contribution of N-Power program to beneficiaries' economic life in Gombe, Nigeria. This study utilized the survey design. Questionnaires were used to collect data, while key informant interview was used to complement the questionnaire. The study also found that N-Power has improved the standard of economic life of the beneficiaries through poverty reduction, proficiency skills in ICT, financial empowerment, on-the-job experience and investment in small scale businesses.

Furthermore, Oyekunle (2020) evaluated the impact and effectiveness of Nigeria's Social Investment Program on youth unemployment and poverty reduction in Ogun state, Nigeria. The research methodologies employed were qualitative and participatory approaches, while 40 semi-structured questionnaires were administered on respondents in the towns of Akute and Ajuwon. The results of the research revealed that the N-Power have recorded some successes in addressing the scourge of youth unemployment and poverty in the towns of Akute and Ajuwon in Ifo Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) examined the impact of N-Power programs on poverty alleviation in Rivers State Nigeria. Survey design was used in this study to generate data. A sample of 400 respondent youths was studied. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data in this study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (r) was used to test the hypotheses. The study found that a significant relationship between N-Power programs and poverty alleviation in Rivers State. The study further found a significant relationship between N-Power programs and empowerment of the youths in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted both case study design and casual design. Case study research design was adopted to allow the researcher gain concrete, contextual, and in-depth knowledge about N-Power program and its implication on poverty reduction among its beneficiaries (Tetnowski, 2015). On the other hand, the study adopted causal research

design to establish the cause-and-effect relationships between N-Power program and poverty reduction (Erickson, 2017).

Study Population

The study population included a total of 5,435 beneficiaries from eight (8) selected local governments of Kano Metropolis i.e. Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kumbotso, Kano Municipal, Nasarawa, Tarauni, and Ungogo (NBS, 2018). The sample size of 222 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire was the main research instrument adopted for this study. Questionnaire was the preferred research instrument because it makes it possible to contact many people who could not otherwise be reached, and covers a large group at the same time (Pattern, 2016).

Data Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength of the linear relationship between N-Power program, and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis. Significant relationships between the variables were established at the 0.05 level of significance.

FINDINGS

Table 1.1: Linear Relationship between N-Power Program and Poverty Reduction

Variables tested		1	2	3	4	5
N-Teach	Pearson Correlation	1				
[1]	Sig. (2-tailed)					
N-Health	Pearson Correlation	-.144[*]	1			
[2]	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010				
N-Agro	Pearson Correlation	.540[**]	.710[**]	1		
[3]	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
N-Power program	Pearson Correlation	.142[*]	.037	.017	1	
[4]	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.512	.758		
Poverty reduction	Pearson Correlation	.557[**]	.706[**]	.238[**]	.488[**]	1
[5]	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The finding in Table above shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between N-Power Program and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis (r =.488[**], p = 0.000). Furthermore, the null hypothesis that this study was anchored upon was that there is no significant relationship between N-Power Program and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis. However, the finding of this study rejects the above hypothesis, and upholds the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between N-Power Program and poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis. The finding thus implies that an increase and improvement in the dispensing of N-Power program to a larger unemployed youth will bring about an influence on poverty reduction.

DISCUSSIONS

The study found that N-Power program is significantly related to poverty reduction in Kano Metropolis. This could be attributed to the fact that N-Power provides an opportunity for Nigerian Youths to be productive, creative, and again innovative. Engaged in profitable work, Nigerian Youths will not be plagued with depression, frustration, or even suicidal thoughts.

The finding of this study agrees with several others such as Adi, et al. (2022) who conducted a study on impact of N-power program on poverty alleviation among youths in Taraba state, Nigeria, and found that the N-power program had alleviated poverty among the youths in Taraba state. Similarly, Bello, et al., (2022) assessed the contribution of N-Power program to beneficiaries' economic life in Gombe, Nigeria, and found N-Power had improved the standard of economic life of the beneficiaries through poverty reduction.

Furthermore, Oyekunle (2020) evaluated the impact and effectiveness of Nigeria's Social Investment Program on youth unemployment and poverty reduction in Ogun state, Nigeria, and found that the N-Power program had recorded some successes in addressing the scourge of youth unemployment and poverty in the towns in Ogun State.

Additionally, Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) examined the impact of N-Power programs on poverty alleviation in Rivers State Nigeria, and found a significant relationship between N-Power programs and poverty alleviation in Rivers State.

However, the finding of this study disagrees with that of Onah and Ugwuibe (2022) who assessed the implementation of N-Power programs in Enugu State, Nigeria, and found that N-Power programs had no significant impact on the reduction of poverty among the youths in Enugu State.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

N-Power program is influencing poverty reduction among its beneficiaries in Kano Metropolis. This implies that the program is gradually gaining traction and achieving its intended purpose of helping Nigerian youths acquire and develop life-long skills to become solution providers in their communities, improve their employability and entrepreneurial skills, improve public service delivery in key focus areas and drive social, economic and financial inclusion.

As a beacon of hope, the program has transformed the lives of many young Nigerians in Kano Metropolis who hitherto lost confidence on the government and the systemic failure that had left them stranded without jobs, skills and sustainable means of livelihood.

The study thus recommends that;

1. There should be enough funds to finance N-Power activities including on-time payment of stipends to the beneficiaries, allowances for ad-hoc staff, and training of staff through workshops, seminars, and symposiums.

2. Furthermore, now that is realized that the N-program is promoting poverty reduction among its beneficiaries, it is necessary that the federal government increases the number of beneficiaries so as to benefit a larger number of youths.

3. The federal government should decentralize, delegate, facilitate, and empower the state and the local governments to monitor, evaluate, appraise, punish or dismiss beneficiaries. This will help to provide check and balances in the proper implementation of the N-Power program in Kano State.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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