

An Assessment of N-Power Socio-Economic Policy on Youth Empowerment in South-West Geo-Political Zone in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluates the effectiveness of the N-Power socio-economic policy in empowering youths in Nigeria, particularly in the South-West geo-political zone (Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, Oyo, and Lagos). In order to assess the program's impact and challenges in addressing the issue of youth unemployment, the study used both primary and secondary data sources. The research gathered primary data through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, while the secondary data was collected from relevant texts, internet materials, magazines, and official publications about the N-Power empowerment program. Statistical analyses such as frequency tables, percentages, and chi-square were used to analyse the data. The study found that the program has made a little impact in creating jobs and wealth. This is due to the program's design neglecting the beneficiaries' impactful participation, leading to targeting problems and threatening the program's sustainability. The study concludes that N-Power empowerment policies have the measures that could significantly impact youth employment and job creation in the selected states in Nigeria. However, it falls short due to several constraints. Therefore, the study recommends that the government should pursue an outward-oriented economy. In the pursuit of an outward-oriented economy, the top policy option available to the government is the revamping of the country's productive base through massive rehabilitation of the nation's infrastructure

Key Words: Public Policy, N-Power, Youth Empowerment and Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country that is blessed with an abundance of natural resources that have the potential to empower its youth to make positive contributions towards sustainable socio-economic development (Ewubare D. B. & Kakain S., 2017). The importance of the youth in any country cannot be overstated, and Nigeria is no exception. However, one of the major challenges facing the Nigerian State today is the issue of youth unemployment (Adebisi, T. A. & Oniz, C. S. 2020). This problem is not unique to Nigeria alone, as it is a global issue that has been drawing the attention of governments and non-governmental organisations worldwide (2016 CBN Report). Despite being found even in developed countries, the percentage and severity of youth unemployment varies from continent to continent and from country to country. The global financial crisis has further exacerbated this problem by encouraging youth unemployment rates to skyrocket worldwide. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the global youth unemployment rate was 23.5 percent in 2023, with no major improvement projected for 2024 (ILO, 2024). Given the recent setbacks to the economy in Africa, unemployment in the continent is expected to rise to around 11.2 percent by the end of 2024.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of young people is estimated at 138 million, of which 21 percent (28.9 million) are currently unemployed. (Dasgupta, O'Higgins, Kim, Esquivel, Stefan, Parisotto, Elsheikhi, and Scheja, 2022). Out of this figure, Nigeria accounts for a significant portion, with over 40 million youths currently unemployed (The Nigerian Economic Summit Group, 2023). Unfortunately, this rate is expected to increase in 2024, with sub-Saharan Africa at 20.8% and Nigeria at 33.3% (NBS, 2023). According to ILO News, as of September 2016, the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria rose from 21 percent to 25 percent, reaching 21.56 percent in the south-west region. As of the third quarter of 2023, Nigeria's unemployment rate rose to 5%, up from 4.2% in the previous quarter, with the jobless rate among young people aged 15-24 increasing to 8.6% from 7.2%. Unemployment in urban areas also increased slightly to 6% from 5.9% in the previous quarter (NBS, 2023).

In recognition of the growing unemployment rate and its associated dangers, every nation and multinational institution has a youth agenda and a youth action plan to reduce unemployment. This is because joblessness among the youths, who are largely educated, trained and have potential for the labour market, represents a waste of human resources. However, the rising incidence of unemployment among the youths, especially before the civilian administration, was not because of the absence of empowerment programmes but the failure of the policymakers to develop an acceptable strategy to engage the concerned group in the process (Abin, 2018). A few of the previous initiatives include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Better Life Programme (BLP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), and the Family Support Programme (FSP). Unfortunately, they were adjudged to have failed several times (Rabiu & Anas, 2018; Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021).

In meeting these challenges, successive civilian administrations, including the Jonathan lead regime, have tried to focus on unemployment programmes by discontinuing many old programmes, restructuring some of them and creating new ones. The administration's prominent programme for tackling youth unemployment includes N-Power.

N-Power was introduced on 8th June, 2016 by President Mohammadu Buhari. At the inauguration, he asserts that:

Unemployment among our youth is one of our biggest challenges. The time has come to create jobs and lay a new foundation for Nigeria's economic growth. (Daily Trust, 2016:10)

N-Power was, therefore, established to improve on the previous youth empowerment programmes in the country, with the mandate to create jobs by encouraging and supporting aspiring entrepreneurial youth in Nigeria to develop and execute business ideas that will lead to job creation (Ayub & Gbaa, 2020). It was designed to create job opportunities, specifically for graduates of tertiary institutions who elect to go into business as entrepreneurs; that is, the participants are required to develop and execute their business ideas that will provide jobs for themselves and other unemployed youths who may or not be a graduate (Ifatimehin, Isyak & Omale, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The rising unemployment rate among young people has become a significant concern in today's world. This is particularly worrying because it threatens global peace and security (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). However, there have been conflicting reports about the success of the N-Power program, which was implemented to address this issue. According to some government officials and media reports, this program has created five million jobs and reduced unemployment levels by 40%. However, there are also counterclaims that challenge these figures. This study aims to identify why previous policies, particularly the N-power policy, have failed to solve youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to assess the impact of the National Youth Empowerment Policies of Muhammadu Buhari's administration in Nigeria with specific reference to N-Power programmes. However, the specific objectives are to:

- To assess the awareness level and involvement of youths and the general public in the N-Power activities as part of the intervention policies for empowerment.
- To investigate the extent to which N-Power programs have addressed the issues of youth unemployment and promoted wealth creation in Nigeria.
- To scrutinize the factors that impede the implementation of N-Power policies in Nigeria and suggest plausible solutions.

Hypothesis

This study was done within the framework of the following hypotheses;

- N-Power has positive impact on youth empowerment in Nigeria.
- N-Power has no significant impact on youth empowerment in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Public Policy: Policy is a tool used by governments to promote political and socio-economic growth. It is a response to the needs of the public and is created by the political system. A definition by Eyestone, cited in Ayodele (2022:18), states that public policy is "the relationship of a government unit to its citizen," which emphasises that the government's responsibility is to solve the problems of its people. Therefore, a government should be sensitive to the public's desires and concerns and not be indifferent to the people's dissatisfaction, deprivation, and suffering. According to Anderson, the most attractive definition of public policy, cited in Omotoso (2020:19), is that "public policy is a purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actions in dealing with a problem or matter of social concern." This definition views public policy as being purposeful, definitive, and directional, implying that a particular public policy must aim to solve a specific policy issue in its uniqueness.

Youth Empowerment: Empowering young people is essential for building human capital and helping them avoid poverty; ensuring they are well-prepared for their future is crucial for poverty reduction and growth. According to Smith & Johnson (2022), empowerment is a process that involves engaging individuals in activities that aim to reduce powerlessness created by negative valuation based on membership in a stigmatised group. Empowerment theory proposes strategies to reduce marginalization and inequality in society. It requires capacity building, awareness building, and skill development to improve the status of the marginalized. Nkambule & Mashiloane (2022) believes empowerment should focus on controlling material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology. Material assets over which control can be exercised may be physical, human, or financial, such as land, water, forest, people's bodies and labor, money, and access to money. Intellectual resources include knowledge, information, and ideas. Control over ideology signifies the ability to generate, propagate, sustain, and institutionalize specific beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours that determine how people perceive and function within a given socioeconomic and political environment.

Theoretical Framework

Various theories could be used to discuss and evaluate public policy on youth empowerment. However, this study utilized the liberal political economy theory. The reason for adopting this theory is that political

economy generally analyses how economic theory and methods influence political ideology. Therefore, it helps expressed the interplay between economics and policy. In recent times, scholars have significantly contributed to studying theories in economics and politics. Johari (2005) states, “those who take an economic approach are likely to seek to relate economic interests to all major public policies and events”. This study adopts the theories of liberal political economy and empowerment theory.

The term political economy is derived from the Greek words “polis”, meaning “city”, “state”, and “oikonomos”. This means one who manages a “household” or “estate” (Keohame, 1995). It can, therefore, be understood as the study of how a country, the public’s household, is managed or governed, considering political and economic factors. Generally, political economy analyses how public policy is created and implemented. It studies and uses how economic theory and methods influence political ideology. Thus, it exposes the interplay between economics and policy. Furthermore, it focuses on how political and economic actors influence production, distribution and consumption processes and shape institutions and policies (Sayer & Hahnel, 2004; Ebner, 2005; Gibbon, 2005; and Keizer, 2005).

The relevance of this theory is in the context of the reciprocal interaction of wealth and power, which takes place within the institutional framework of crucial forms of social organisation: the state, resources, wealth allocation, and the people. Gilpin (2003) and Mimiko (2010) submit that the relationship between economics and politics, at least in the modern world, is reciprocal. Politics largely determines the framework of economic activities and channels it in the direction intended to serve the interests of dominant groups. Meanwhile, the economic process tends to redistribute power and wealth, transforming the power relationships among groups, institutions, and organisations.

The insight this theory creates can expose the nature, character, and role of economics, politics, and policies of poverty reduction among the citizenry. According to Ravenhill (2005), the theory is, at best, individual-concentrated as its emphasis is on individual enterprise, virtues of market competition, and restricting the state’s role to what is required to ensure that markets can operate successfully. Ultimately, individuals strive to improve their lot, but the logic of competition in the marketplace ensures that the selfish motivations underlying their enterprise benefit society as a whole.

In his work, Pennington (2011) highlights the theoretical challenges of classical liberalism as a branch of political economy. He classifies these challenges into three categories: market failure arguments, the challenge of egalitarianism, and communitarianism. The production and distribution process are unequal in a world with imperfect knowledge and rationality. This perspective is important to this study because adopting these approaches can lead to economic, political, and educational empowerment for young people. With innovative ideas, they can play a significant role in developmental policies.

Meaning, Emergence and Mandate of N-Power Programme,

The N-Power initiative is a government-run social investment program aimed at improving the quality of life of Nigerian youth by creating job opportunities and empowering them. It is part of President Muhammadu Buhari’s “Empowering Nigeria Youth for Prosperity policy.” The program was launched on 8th June 2016 to reduce unemployment and youth joblessness while improving social development among the country’s youths. The initiative is a segment of the National Social Investment Program (NSIP), which aims to provide opportunities for young people to develop relevant skills and work experience to help them find or create jobs.

To ensure transparency and accountability, interested youth apply online through the official N-Power portal and take an assessment test. Qualified candidates are then selected for one of four categories: N-Tax, N- Health, N-Agro, and N-Teach, based on their academic background. Each participant is given a device

that facilitates continuous learning and helps them to implement their selected vocation. They also receive a monthly stipend of 30,000 naira to support themselves as they train and work towards their career goals.

The N-Power Programme is aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment among Nigerian youths. Its primary objective is to

- directly improve the livelihoods of a significant number of young unemployed Nigerians.
- develop a high-quality system that will transform its beneficiaries’ employability, entrepreneurial, and technical skills.
- create a solution-based ecosystem that supports public services and the diversification policies of the government.
- enhance Nigeria’s knowledge economy by fostering and expanding it (n-power.org.ng).

METHODOLOGY

The research conducted used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was gathered through questionnaires and in-depth interviews (IDI), while secondary data was sourced from relevant journals, handbooks, bulletins, official publications on N-Power, relevant websites and gazettes that address the subject matters.

The study area consisted of the states within Nigeria’s South West geo-political zone. The research area included residents of each state capital. Since it was impossible to contact the entire area, a representative sample was selected to manage the survey spread effectively. The purposely selected locations for the study include Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States.

In each state, 200 questionnaires were purposely administered to the general public who are expected beneficiaries of the programmes within the selected towns. The researcher used a snowball sampling technique, meaning beneficiaries directed the researcher to another beneficiary. However, the purposive selection considered knowledge, expertise and involvement in the programmes under investigation.

The study employed the mixed method of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data from the questionnaire survey was analysed with appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequencies, simple percentages (%), and chi-square analyses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05.

Questionnaire administration and retrieval.

This section deals with distributing and retrieving questionnaires administered with respect to the six selected locations, having obtained valid information from the concerned officers and respondents from all the study locations.

Table 1 Questionnaire administration and retrieval

Selected locations		Questionnaire administered	Retrieval	Questionnaire selected and analyzed
State	Towns			
Ekiti	Ado-Ekiti	220	208	200
Ondo	Akure	220	215	200
Osun	Osogbo	220	210	200
Ogun	Abeokuta	220	210	200

Oyo	Ibadan	220	215	200
Lagos	Ikeja/Island	220	212	200
TOTAL		1320	1274	1200

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 displays the distribution of the questionnaires that were administered and retrieved. The table indicates that 200 respondents were required for each location. However, an additional 10% was added to account for retrieval errors, making it a total of 220 target respondents in each location, amounting to a sum of 1320. The table also demonstrates that at Ekiti, Ondo, and Osun, 208, 215, and 214 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, respectively. Similarly, 210, 215, and 212 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from Ogun, Oyo, and Lagos, respectively. Overall, 1274 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, from which the necessary 1200 copies were selected for analysis. It is worth noting that in all the locations, the copies of the questionnaire received were more than the required sample size. Therefore, the excesses were removed using a non-probability systematic sampling technique, where every fourth item was withdrawn until the required sample size for analysis of each study area was achieved.

Level of Awareness and Mandates of the activities of N-Power empowerment by the youths and general public

In addressing the first objective, tests on the awareness level and mandates of both youths and the general public on the activities of N-Power were analysed using frequency count and percentage distributions.

Table 2: Quantitative Data Analysis showing the level of youth and public awareness on N-Power activities

Variables	Response Options	States						
		Ekiti	Ondo	Osun	Ogun	Oyo	Lagos	Total
Average Summary	Yes	81 (40.5)	92 (46)	101 (50.5)	103 (51.5)	120 (60.0)	106 (53.0)	603 (50.3)
	UnD	4 (2.0)	17 (8.5)	15 (7.5)	8 (4.0)	16 (8.0)	6 (3.0)	66 (5.5)
	No	115 (57.5)	91 (45.5)	84 (42.0)	89 (44.5)	64 (32.0)	88 (44.0)	531 (44.2)
	Total instates	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.00)	200 (100.0)	120 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The survey results on individuals' awareness levels regarding N-Power activities are presented in Table 4.8a. The majority of respondents (59.9%) affirmed that they were aware of N-Power as a government socio-economic policy. Only 7.6% were indecisive in their response, while 32.5% indicated they were unaware. This result was consistent across the sampled states, except for Ondo State, where 44.5% said they were not aware, 24.5% were indecisive, and only 31% knew about N-Power as the government's socio-economic policy.

It was also observed that 51.5% of respondents believed they were aware of the target or mandates of the N-Power programme. Only 5.4% were undecided, while 43.1% indicated they were not aware of the programme's target or mandates. This observation was similar across states, except for Ekiti State, where the majority (64%) said they were not aware of the target or mandates of the N-Power programme, only 1% were undecided, and 35% said they were aware.

In summary, the findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (50.3%) had a high level of awareness of the activities of the N-Power scheme in their states. Those that indicated low awareness levels were 44.2%, while 5.5% were undecided in their responses. This means that most of the youths and the public have a good understanding of the activities of the N-Power scheme in their states.

Analysis of Qualitative Data on Awareness and the operation of N-Power empowerment in South/West Nigeria.

Contrary to the response of some respondents to the questionnaire, participants of the In-depth Interview (IDI) had a different opinion in some states. The majority of the participants at the IDI sections in some states, such as Ekiti, Ondo and Osun, claimed low awareness about N-Power empowerment programmes. Meanwhile, in some states, such as Ogun, Oyo, and Lagos, only a few participants claimed to be fully or partially aware of the empowerment activities in their state.

In the IDI conducted in Ado and its environs of Ekiti State, the majority claimed that they had no awareness of the programme. A participant summed it all up when he stated:

“We don't know much about N-Power, I only heard of it from a friend. N-Power is not a popular programme. It becomes a difficult task for me to know whether it is a successful programme or not” (Oral Interview).

The opinion of the participant reveals that, the N-Power he claimed awareness, of was just ordinary hear-say. He did not have a deep knowledge of its operation. A participant from Ondo State on his opinion said that:

I am not aware of N-Power initiatives. It is also certain many citizens of Nigeria are not enlightened about its existence; let alone what it stands for. The officials are inefficient and their impact is not felt anywhere: we did not even know whether they have their offices in any State apart from FCT, Abuja. They can't be effective.

In a similar opinion, a respondent who claimed to be a youth leader in Ondo State informed that:

“I am aware of N-Power as an empowerment programme in Nigeria. There is not enough publicity for the programme. Quite a large number of youths are not aware of the programme, not to talk of their involvement in the initiation of the policy” (Oral Interview)

Against the opinion of other participants in Ekiti, Ondo and Osun State, some respondent from Oyo and Lagos States claimed awareness of the programme. According to one of them:

I am not saying the publicity of N-Power was a total success, but all the gatherings where the sensitization programmes took place were crowded. Apart from the high level of attendants, questions were equally asked.

Another respondent equally added that:

“Voluntary membership was involved in most crusades, where T-shirts, stickers and caps with N-Power inscription were distributed among students and corps members” (Oral Interview).

Considering the above submission, it can be said that citizens were well educated about N-Power initiatives as youth empowerment programmes. This was borne out of government’s commitment to the reduction of the scourge of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Table 3: Quantitative Data Analysis showing the extent to which initiation of N-Power policy had solved the problems of youth unemployment in Nigeria

Variables	Response Options	States						
		Ekiti	Ondo	Osun	Ogun	Oyo	Lagos	Total
Average Summary	Yes	34 (17.0)	107 (53.5)	88 (44.0)	121 (60.5)	104 (52.0)	121 (60.5)	575 (47.9)
	UnD	51 (25.5)	19 (9.5)	26 (13)	5 (2.5)	28 (14)	3 (1.5)	132 (11.0)
	No	115 (57.5)	74 (37.0)	86 (43.0)	74 (37.0)	68 (34)	76 (38.0)	493 (41.1)
	Total in States	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	1200 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 shows the analysis of items related to the extent to which the N-Power policy solves the problems associated with youth unemployment in Nigeria based on the sampled States. It was noted generally that 54.6% of the respondents did not accept the statement that there is a decrease in the involvement of youths in negative vices in society due to N-Power empowerment; 6.1% were undecided, while 39.3% supported the statement. This means that even with the initiation of the N-Power policy, youths still engage in negative vices. This result was contradicted by the findings in Ondo, Osun and Oyo State(s) such that the majority (56%, 50% and 55%, respectively) agreed with the statement that there is a decrease in the involvement of youths in negative vices within the society as a result of N-Power empowerment.

In conclusion, it could be summated that 47.9% of the respondents generally perceived that the N-Power scheme has been impactful in solving the problems associated with youth unemployment in Nigeria, 11% were undecided about the situation, while 41.1% said it did not solve the problems of unemployment. This was evident across the States, except in Ekiti State, where most of the sampled respondents (57.5%) said it did not contribute to the reduction of unemployment among youths.

4.2.4 Analysis of Qualitative Data on the Impact of the N-Power Programme on Youth Empowerment.

Generating employment was one of the main goals of President Muhammadu Buhari’s administration’s policy. The argument from the quantitative data that N-Power has not really impacted Nigerian youth as

expected is further verified by most interviewees and participants during some of the IDI sections on the effects of the N-Power programme on youth empowerment in South West Nigeria; a participant during IDI section in Ondo State who claimed low awareness about N-Power states that:

I know and I am aware of N-Power, especially the N-Tech and N-Teach schemes where graduates were attached to some organization for skill acquisition. I know of an Igbo friend Nwachukwu Joy who benefited from N-Power in Akure here, I don't know of any other. (Oral interview)

In a different perspective, a participant in Abeokuta in Ogun State and a beneficiary of N-Power scheme while sharing her testimony says that:

Sure-P is a very good programme. It enhanced my skill and provided me with practical knowledge and also improved my chances of employment by the firm that provided the training. Now I can confidently say that I have the skill to establish my own business through the monthly allowance provided by the government (Interview).

Also, another participant during IDI in Oyo State who claimed to be one of the beneficiaries of N-Power empowerment programme states that:

I do strongly commend this initiative; probably it's true that not many things worked so far in Nigeria. However, when we do get an opportunity to do something that may change our lives and the country at large, we should seize it. N-Power helped me to change my story to be a proud owner of a cassava processing firm. Thanks to our president (Oral Interview).

Very close to this opinion, another participant also a beneficiary of N-Power from Lagos State while telling her success story declares that:

N-Power had helped me with my dream to change the landscape of my private business practice and owner of a shop with grading Machine. He added that, it is the panacea which the youths of Nigeria need to curb this menace of unemployment (Oral Interview)

Contrary to the above, however, a participant of N-Power beneficiary from Osogbo, Osun State laments delayed in payment of their allowance and says that:

The organizers of the programme had failed to release their monthly allowance since January having fulfilled all the requirements. Where do we get money for transport to work? But they have refused to pay us. The programme is a failure (Oral Interview).

Also, commenting on the programmes generally, another respondent says that:

N-Tax and N-Health scheme of N-Power only succeeded in the cities like Lagos, Oyo and Ogun States where there are companies that can meet the selection criterion, but places like Ondo, Ekiti and Osun State were left out. The unemployment figure is still high, even at 33 percent (Oral Interview).

Table 4.: Quantitative Data Analysis showing the factors militating against the implementation of N-Power policies in Nigeria

Variables	Response Options	States						
		Ekiti	Ondo	Osun	Ogun	Oyo	Lagos	Total
Average Summary		96	106	90	88	91	91	562
	Yes	(48.0)	(53.0)	(45.0)	(44.0)	(45.5)	(45.5)	(46.8)

Average Summary	UnD	40 (20.0)	17 (8.5)	19 (9.5)	7 (3.5)	24 (12.0)	3 (1.5)	110 (9.2)
	No	64 (32.0)	77 (38.5)	91 (45.5)	105 (52.5)	85 (42.5)	106 (53.0)	528 (44.0)
	Total in States	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)	200 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The average summary revealed that 46.8% of the respondents confirmed the implication of the identified areas and situations as factors militating against implementing N-Power as a policy for youth empowerment. Those who gave undecided responses were 9.2%, while 44% did not affirm the identified factors.

These little differences in responses were observed across the States, with some having little increase in support (Ekiti, Ondo and Oyo), one made a significant difference (Osun), while others had little increase in the level of disagreement (Lagos and Ogun). Thus, it could be concluded that the identified areas are not the only features militating against the implementation of these policies. However, there is room for improvement in the identified ones.

Analysis of Qualitative Data on the Challenges of Implementation of N-Power Policies in Nigeria.

Commenting on the challenges confronting the implementation of N-Power empowerment programmes, most interviewers identified a lack of public awareness, bureaucratic bottlenecks and general administrative corruption within the system. Given this, a participant opines that:

“Some of the major challenges faced by and N-Power are lack of publicity and awareness on the part of the government and citizens. I am sure that most Nigerians are not aware of N-Power as youth empowerment programmes” (Oral Interview).

Similarly, another respondent identified some challenges but still acknowledged a level of positive performance in spite of these challenges. He expresses that:

Lack of publicity and sensitization are notable challenges faced by N-Power in some States; nevertheless, N-Power has been helpful in reducing unemployment among some youths in Southwestern Nigeria.

Also, a respondent identifies the complexity and policy abandonment as major problems of N-Power initiative. He says that:

So many Nigerians are finding it extremely complex to understand the policy and there is problem of policy abandonment in the country; for any empowerment programme to be effective, it must be relatively extended beyond the tenure of the initiator of the programme(Oral Interview).

Based on the selection process, a participant declares that:

The selection process is one kind, on my struggle to be part of the programme (N-Power), many candidates applied in Lagos State alone, only few were picked. I was privileged to be amongst them (Oral Interview)

On the challenges of corruption; another interviewee avers that:

To formulate policy in Nigeria is never a problem, but there are lots of problems in implementation. There were allegations of massive corruption against officers in charge of the programme. In my own opinion, the policy was hurriedly initiated which I believe is a child of circumstances, I will suggest massive rethinking on the sustainability of the policy. The idea may be good but the actual operation seems to have defeated the goals (Oral Interview)

From the above, corruption is central to implementing any socio-economic policy in Nigeria. This work has been able to establish a dialectical link between governance styles and the achievement of socio-economic intervention in Nigeria. The latter's impact on the former largely depends on the conduct within the institutions of governance; the state is expected to strengthen its capacity for realizing its vision and mission.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses were analyzed using the chi-square test of association analysis. This analysis considered the differences among the six sampled states in response to the hypothesized areas, except for hypothesis 2, where a simple chi-square test was conducted to compare the observed general distributions. Since the hypotheses were formulated by the items in some of the research questions, the items used in such research questions were summated and averaged to test the hypotheses. The findings are summarized in the tables below.

Hypothesis 1:

Table 4.12: Frequency and Percentage distribution showing the impact of N-Power SCHEME on youth empowerment in Nigeria

Variables	Response Options	Observed N	%	Expected N	X ²	Df	p
Lots of people has benefited from the programme and the beneficiaries now selfreliant	Yes	575	47.9	400.0	277.745	2	.000
	Un D	132	11.0	400.0			
	No	493	41.1	400.0			
	Total	1200	100.0				

RESEARCH DECISION

N-Power

Calculated X² = 277.745

df = r-1 = 3-1 = 2

Critical X² = 6.00

α = .05 (2 tailed)

Research Result: Critical X² < Calculated X² @ α = .05

It was indicated in Table 4.12 that most of the respondents (47.9%) affirmed that many people have benefited from the N-Power programme and the beneficiaries are now self-reliant; 11% were not certain, while 41.1% disagreed. With the findings in calculated X^2 value of 277.745 and df of 2, the observed table value of 6.00 at 0.05 significant level indicated a significant difference in the observations. This means that the N-Power scheme significantly influences youth empowerment in Nigeria.

Research Result: Critical $X^2 < \text{Calculated } X^2 @ \alpha = .05$

The result negates the formulated null hypothesis 2, which says there is no significant difference in the impact of N-POWER on youth empowerment across the selected States. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

FINDINGS

The findings reveal that the Nigerian state has made several attempts to engage its teeming unemployed youths in both public and private services; the N-Power policy is yet another employment generation strategy of the Federal Government with the aim of providing jobs for the unemployed youths.

The study reveals that socio-economic interventions in Nigeria have suffered from corruption and inadequate feasibility analysis.

The study found that the lack of an entrenched participatory approach, which accounted for the failures of some of the previous programmes, is also significant in the design and the implementation of N-Power interventions. The government always assumed the needs of its citizens.

The study further discovered that the level of awareness across classes of people in the selected states was at variance. It was revealed, based on the questionnaire survey in some states, that a significant majority.

The study found that the challenge confronting the implementation of N-Power as a socio-economic intervention is the strategy of top-bottom approach rather than bottom-up, in that the input, activities and outputs, as decided by the technical aspect of N-Power design, flagrantly neglected the participation of the beneficiaries. This largely created the targeting problem and the eventual sustainability of the programmes. Other challenges identified include insufficient publicity and inadequate information about the policy's operations. Finally, the study revealed that the N-Power scheme has a significant positive influence on youth empowerment in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The desire by President Muhammadu Buhari's led administration to create more jobs, eschew unemployment, reduce poverty and enhance youth capacity building in Nigeria led to the initiation of the N-Power empowerment programme. The study contends that socio-economic interventions in Nigeria have suffered from corruption and inadequate feasibility analysis. This is not to talk of the culture of policy discontinuation, which characterises every change of governmental baton in the country. Nigerian leaders and followers should have a change of attitude regarding the above if the nation is to move forward. Also, an inclusive mechanism would involve other tiers of government for efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability, which is essential.

Moreover, the existence of an initiative such as the N-Power empowerment programme is expected to be well known to the public, especially the youths residing in the grassroots, who are apparently the target group of the initiative. The study has been able to establish that a lot of resources were invested in the N-

Power intervention, while the number of youths the policy proudly aimed to cover within its short and long-run projections is minimal when compared with the total population of the unemployed youths in the country which keeps on skyrocketing on daily bases. However, for the government to achieve service delivery with integrity, the capacity to perform is essential, and efforts must be beyond the drafting of policies on paper but must also contain an achievable and independent delivery mechanism with pro-active bureaucratic elements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having identified the various challenges in combating the implementation of development cannot be neglected, and since it has been established that youths play a vital role in national development, the role of youths in the Nigerian economy cannot be ignored. On this note, our recommendations are made to address the major challenges identified through the findings of the study. They are as follows:

It is an established fact that the fight against youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria cannot go far unless policymakers ensure the participation of the concerned groups. This study, therefore, recommends the adoption of a participatory model in the conception and execution of future interventions. This will guarantee the full involvement of the people and go a long way in ensuring the sustainability of the programmes.

Also, to make way for the effectiveness of socio-economic policy in its operations, more efforts should be put into awareness and public orientation, particularly at the grassroots level. This would change the public perception of government policy, especially the Nigerian youths, who felt that only those close to politicians benefitted from youth employment and empowerment interventions.

The study further recommends the need to scale down the scope of the sectoral schemes of future socio-economic policy on empowerment. The assessment of N-Teach and N-Health programmes of N-Power has revealed the need to scale down the scope of the sectoral schemes and improve the focus. As revealed in the study, much energy and resources were wasted with little to show for it because of the difficulties in coordination and monitoring due to the possibility of duplication of efforts.

In the contemporary world, all federal systems have found it imperative to engage in a network of formal and informal interactions (intergovernmental relations) between or among levels of government in the polity. In view of this, the study advocates for real, interactive and deepened cooperation among Federal-State-Local governments to make policy implementation attainable, as the proper functioning of a Federal system requires a network of informal, intergovernmental and interpersonal relations among officials of the tiers of government. Thus, this study is of the opinion that in future socio-economic interventions, other tiers of government must be part of the formulation and implementation of such interventions.

Based on this, future policies should be subjected to regular monitoring in order to evaluate and prescribe necessary adjustments.

Also, based on the findings, the study also recommends the development of sector-wide standards in transparency and accountability to guide future youth employment programmes and encourage civil society actors to be actively involved in the monitoring process. This would minimise corruption among government officers. Moreover, regarding the technical quality of the intervention, the government should create more skill acquisition centres in each geopolitical zone.

Finally, equally noticed as central to the incidence of unemployment is infrastructural decadence or problems. Based on the above, it is suggested that the government should pursue an outward-oriented economy. In the pursuit of an outward-oriented economy, the top policy option available to the government

is the revamping of the country's productive base through massive rehabilitation of the nation's infrastructure. Electricity supply has to be improved to boost industrial operations as well as productivity among small businesses.

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