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N-Power Programme and Poverty Reduction: A Post Beneficiaries Exploration in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study investigates the impact of the N-Power programme on poverty reduction in Niger State, with a specific focus on the 2020 Batch A, B, and C beneficiaries. The objectives were to assess the employment status of post-beneficiaries, examine changes in income and living standards, and explore the challenges encountered after exiting the programme. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and employed a quantitative research approach. A sample of 354 respondents was selected from a population of 3,091 beneficiaries using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and multiple regression analysis with the aid of Stata 17. The findings revealed that 61.9% of beneficiaries were employed after the programme, with a statistically significant improvement in their income levels and living standards. However, key challenges such as lack of startup capital, difficulty securing permanent employment, and absence of post-exit support were identified. Regression results indicated that employment status, income, skill utilization, and ability to save were significant predictors of poverty reduction. The study concludes that while the N-Power programme has positively influenced the economic conditions of many young Nigerians in Niger State, its long-term impact can be strengthened through post-programme support, access to finance, and improved policy implementation. Recommendations include the provision of soft loans or grants, establishment of mentorship structures, private sector engagement, and development of a beneficiary tracking system to ensure sustainability and continued poverty alleviation.

1. Introduction

The N-Power program represents one of Nigeria's largest social intervention initiatives, specifically designed to address the persistent challenges of youth unemployment and poverty across the country. Introduced as part of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), N-Power targets young Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35 by offering them skills acquisition, vocational training, and temporary employment to enhance their productivity and economic independence (Aminu&Aliyu, 2024; Uche&Ozovehe, 2022). In regions like Niger State, where poverty and unemployment remain deeply rooted, such programs play a vital role in the government's broader poverty alleviation framework (Ebegbulem et al., 2022; Aminu&Aliyu, 2024).

Niger State, located in Nigeria's North Central geopolitical zone, faces unique socio-economic challenges despite various government interventions. The state's high poverty and unemployment rates disproportionately affect its youth population, leading to long-term social and economic vulnerabilities (Adetona et al., 2023; Mohammad & David, 2019). Although several programs have been implemented to mitigate these issues, the impact has often been uneven, with studies reporting fluctuating poverty levels across local government areas (Robert et al., 2023; Sudaryantoet al., 2023). The N-Power program, with its components such as N-Teach, N-Agro, and N-Health, offers a targeted approach by equipping participants with skills and stipends intended to help them achieve self-reliance and improve their standard of living (Yakubu et al., 2023; Uche&Ozovehe, 2022).

This study aims to critically examine the effectiveness of the N-Power program in reducing poverty in Niger State by focusing on the post-beneficiary outcomes of the 2020 batch. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) assess the employment status of N-Power post-beneficiaries; (2) examine changes in income and living standards of these beneficiaries; and (3) explore the challenges they face after exiting the program. The goal is to determine whether the intervention results in long-term socio-economic improvements and contributes to breaking the cycle of poverty (Ezekiel & Faith, 2023; Aminu&Aliyu, 2024).

Prior studies have often centered on the immediate gains of social programs, but there is a growing need for post-intervention assessments that evaluate whether the acquired skills translate into sustained livelihoods and economic growth. By shifting focus to post-beneficiary experiences, this study highlights the broader, long-term implications of N-Power, identifies existing gaps in program implementation, and provides policy-relevant insights. The findings will not only contribute to a more understanding of youth empowerment strategies but also offer actionable recommendations for improving poverty reduction efforts in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Poverty

Poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by deprivation in income, access to basic services, and inability to meet minimum standards of living. The World Bank (2022) defines poverty as a condition where an individual lives on less than $2.15 per day, encompassing not only low income but also lack of access to health, education, and decent living conditions. In Nigeria, poverty remains a persistent challenge, with significant regional disparities and a high incidence in rural and northern regions like Niger State (NBS, 2020). Poverty manifests in various forms, including food insecurity, lack of employment, poor health, and low educational attainment.

2.2 Poverty Reduction Strategies

Poverty reduction involves deliberate policies and programmes aimed at improving the well-being and economic empowerment of the poor. These strategies often include job creation, access to education and healthcare, social safety nets, and financial inclusion. According to Olowookere and Adegbite (2019), effective poverty reduction efforts must be people-centered, sustainable, and inclusive. In Nigeria, key strategies include the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), of which N-Power is a major component, aimed at empowering youth through skills development and job placement.

2.3 Overview of the N-Power Programme

The N-Power programme was launched in 2016 by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the NSIP to tackle youth unemployment and poverty. It targets Nigerian youth between the ages of 18 and 35 and aims to provide them with vocational skills, work experience, and stipends over a fixed period. N-Power components include N-Teach, N-Agro, N-Health, N-Tech, N-Creative, and N-Build. According to the National Social Investment Office (NSIO, 2021), over 500,000 youths have been enrolled across Nigeria since inception. The programme is expected to boost human capital development, encourage entrepreneurship, and increase employability.

3. Theoretical Review

3.1 Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory, advanced by Becker (1964), posits that investment in education, skills, and health enhances individuals' productivity and economic potential. In the context of N-Power, the programme's training and work placement components are investments that equip participants with skills needed to increase income and reduce poverty. This theory underpins the rationale for using skill acquisition as a pathway to poverty alleviation.

3.2 Empowerment Theory

Empowerment Theory, as described by Zimmerman (2000), emphasizes enhancing individuals' ability to make choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes. The N-Power programme, by providing participants with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to improve their economic conditions, aligns with this theory. Empowerment economic, social, and psychological is central to sustained poverty reduction.

3.3 Empirical Review

The body of empirical research on the N-Power programme presents a nuanced picture of its contributions to poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in Nigeria. Collectively, the studies reviewed converge on several key themes positive impacts on income and skills development, programmatic and administrative challenges, and regional variations in effectiveness. Several studies (e.g., Adesina, 2020; Eze & Nnadi, 2021; Ojo & Salawu, 2021; Abdullahi, 2018) consistently report that the N-Power programme led to tangible improvements in beneficiaries' income levels, financial independence, and entrepreneurial capabilities, particularly through skill acquisition and vocational training. For instance, Adesina (2020) recorded a 30% increase in household income, while Adewale and Olagunju (2020) documented a 25% reduction in poverty among rural beneficiaries. Similarly, Aliyu (2018) and Mohammed et al. (2023) affirmed the relevance of the programme in equipping participants with in-demand skills in ICT, agriculture, and health, contributing to local economic development.

However, despite these positive outcomes, many studies highlight significant implementation gaps that weaken the programme's overall impact. For example, Odalonu and Adigu (2023), Agbaje and Kolawole (2020), and Aminu and Aliyu (2024) all reported challenges including irregular payment of stipends, inadequate training materials, corruption, and political interference. These operational inefficiencies often undermined beneficiaries' motivation and restricted their ability to transition into sustainable employment after exiting the programme. The issue of post-program sustainability also emerged as a consistent concern. Studies by Ibrahim & Usman (2021) and Ojo & Salawu (2021) underscore the lack of job placement or business start-up support after training, which hampers long-term poverty reduction. Kayode et al. (2024) and Dauda et al. (2019) further emphasized that, while some participants gained temporary economic relief, many were left without stable means of livelihood after the programme ended.

Gender and regional disparities were also noted. Eze and Nnadi (2021) and Adewale & Olagunju (2020) showed that rural women particularly benefited from N-Power through increased economic participation and asset ownership. However, cultural barriers and regional inequalities, especially in conservative or underserved areas, limited women's participation and access to programme benefits (Eze & Nnadi, 2021; Amanie & Elenwa, 2024). Moreover, macro-level analyses such as those by Balogun (2019) and Robert et al. (2023) provided a broader economic evaluation. While Balogun noted a modest contribution of N-Power to GDP growth and employment, Robert et al. found no statistically significant reduction in national poverty levels, suggesting that the programme's effects may be more localized or short-term in nature. Overall, while the N-Power programme has shown potential in short-term poverty relief, human capital development, and youth empowerment, the literature agrees that structural reforms including improved monitoring, transparent fund disbursement, structured exit strategies, and broader access to capital are essential for sustained impact. These insights underscore the need for context-specific adjustments and greater policy coherence to ensure that social investment programmes like N-Power can fully meet their objectives of inclusive poverty alleviation across Nigeria.

4. Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology adopted to examine the impact of the N-Power programme on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Niger State, focusing on the 2020 Batch A, B, and C cohorts. The study adopted a descriptive survey design using a quantitative approach. This design is appropriate for systematically collecting and analyzing data related to post-beneficiary outcomes. Primary data were obtained using a structured questionnaire, which was administered directly to selected N-Power beneficiaries. The questionnaire was divided into sections that captured demographic and socio-economic information, employment status after the programme, changes in income and living standards, and the challenges faced after exiting the scheme. The instrument included both closed-ended questions (e.g., Likert scale and multiple-choice) and a few open-ended questions to provide richer contextual insight. To enhance reliability and clarity, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents who were not included in the final sample. Feedback from the pilot phase was used to revise the questionnaire to ensure it was appropriate and user-friendly.

The population of the study consisted of all N-Power Batch A, B, and C beneficiaries of the 2020 cycle in Niger State. According to records from the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), a total of 3,091 beneficiaries were deployed across various sectors such as N-Teach, N-Agro, and N-Health during that period. These beneficiaries form the sampling frame for the study. To determine the appropriate sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula for a finite population was applied at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Using this formula, the calculated sample size was approximately 354 respondents. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, beneficiaries were stratified by batch (A, B, C) and programme component. In the second stage, local government areas were randomly selected from each senatorial zone (North, South, and East). In the final stage, proportionate random sampling was used to select individual respondents from each stratum to ensure balanced representation based on batch, sector, and geographical distribution.

The study's dependent variable is *poverty reduction*, which was assessed through indicators such as employment status, income change, savings ability, and improvements in living conditions after participation in the N-Power programme. The independent variables include employment status (measured as a binary variable: employed = 1, unemployed = 0), monthly income (measured in naira), skill utilization (binary: 1 = using acquired skills, 0 = not), savings capability (measured as average monthly amount saved), and educational qualification (categorized into secondary, tertiary, postgraduate, etc.). Control variables such as age, gender, marital status, and family size were also considered, as these may influence post-programme outcomes.

To evaluate the relationship between these variables and poverty reduction, a multiple regression model was specified as follows:

$$Y = \alpha 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \beta 4X4 + \beta 5X5 + \beta 6X6 + ui \text{ ------------------------------eqt1}$$

Where Y represents the poverty reduction outcome (proxied by income level); X1 = employment status, X2 = monthly income, X3 = skill utilization, X4= savings capability, X5 = education level, and X6 = family size. α0 is the constant term, and ui represents the stochastic error term. This model helps to estimate the degree to which post-programme conditions influenced the economic empowerment of N-Power beneficiaries. Data analysis was conducted using Stata version 17. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic characteristics and post-programme experiences of the respondents. For inferential analysis, paired t-tests were used to compare income and living standards before and after participation in the programme. Logistic regression was applied to estimate the probability of beneficiaries securing employment post-programme, while Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was used to assess the impact of independent variables on beneficiaries' income and savings levels. Data were screened for accuracy, missing values, outliers, and coding errors. Diagnostic checks for normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were also performed to ensure the validity of the regression models.

5. Result

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	202	57.1%
	Female	152	42.9%
Age Group	18–25	74	20.9%
	26–35	178	50.3%
	36–45	72	20.3%
	46 and above	30	8.5%
Marital Status	Single	157	44.4%
	Married	187	52.8%
	Divorced/Widowed	10	2.8%
Educational Qualification	SSCE	28	7.9%
	OND/NCE	92	26.0%
	HND/BSc	184	52.0%
	MSc and above	50	14.1%

Employment Status of Post-Beneficiaries

The employment status of respondents after exiting the N-Power program was analyzed. As shown below:

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed	219	61.9%
Unemployed	135	38.1%

Out of 354 respondents, 219 (61.9%) reported being employed after the program, while 135 (38.1%) remained unemployed. This suggests that the N-Power program positively influenced employment outcomes for many beneficiaries.

Changes in Income and Living Standards

Monthly Income Before and After N-Power Participation

Monthly Income (₦)	Before N-Power (%)	After N-Power (%)
Less than ₦20,000	48.9%	12.1%
₦20,000 – ₦50,000	42.3%	44.4%
Above ₦50,000	8.8%	43.5%
t stat (353)	9.63	$p<0.001$

A paired sample t-test comparing income before and after N-Power showed a significant improvement. This indicates that the N-Power program had a statistically significant positive effect on income levels among participants.

Changes in Living Standards

Living Standards	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improved	217	61.3%
No Change	108	30.5%
Worsened	29	8.2%

More than 60% of beneficiaries reported an improved standard of living after the programme, reflecting positive welfare outcomes.

Challenges Faced After Exiting the Programme

Respondents were asked to identify the key challenges they encountered after completing their N-Power engagement. Results were as follows (multiple responses allowed):

Challenges Faced	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of startup capital	252	71.2%
Difficulty securing permanent job	193	54.5%
Business failure or lack of market	107	30.2%
No access to mentorship or support	89	25.1%

The most common post-exit challenge was lack of capital (71.2%), which hindered many beneficiaries from utilizing their acquired skills for entrepreneurship or self-employment.

Regression Analysis: Determinants of Post-Program Poverty Reduction

A multiple linear regression was performed to assess the effect of key variables on poverty reduction, measured by income change and ability to save.

Regression Results (OLS Model)

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Employment Status	0.421	0.075	5.61	0.000
Monthly Income (Log)	0.319	0.092	3.47	0.001
Skill Utilization	0.236	0.084	2.81	0.005
Savings Capability	0.401	0.069	5.81	0.000
Education Level	0.118	0.063	1.87	0.062
Family Size	-0.094	0.051	-1.84	0.067
Constant	1.104	0.112	9.86	0.000
R-squared	0.562			
F-statistic (p-value)	48.23 (0.000)			

The model shows that employment status, income, skill utilization, and ability to save have significant positive effects on poverty reduction. Education and family size are borderline significant.

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the N-Power programme has had a positive impact on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Niger State, particularly for the 2020 Batch A, B, and C. With over 61.9% of respondents securing some form of employment after the programme and a statistically significant increase in income levels, the data affirms that N-Power played a meaningful role in enhancing economic opportunities. This is consistent with the work of Adesina (2020) and Mohammed et al. (2023), who found that N-Power participation led to measurable improvements in income, financial independence, and livelihood stability due to stipends and vocational training. The study further reveals that over 61% of beneficiaries experienced improved living standards, reinforcing the programme's short-term value in mitigating poverty. These findings support earlier empirical results by Adewale and Olagunju (2020) and Eze and Nnadi (2021), who documented similar outcomes, especially among rural and female beneficiaries who gained financial autonomy through skill acquisition and income growth.

However, the results also expose key limitations. A substantial number of beneficiaries (71.2%) identified lack of startup capital as a critical barrier to transitioning from programme support to sustainable self-employment. Likewise, over half (54.5%) reported difficulty securing permanent employment. These challenges mirror those highlighted by Odalonu and Adigu (2023) and

Agbaje and Kolawole (2020), who emphasized that inadequate access to credit facilities, absence of structured exit plans, and weak linkages to employment or entrepreneurship opportunities undermine the long-term goals of the programme. The regression results in this study further underscore that employment status, income level, skill utilization, and savings capacity are significant predictors of poverty reduction, which aligns with findings by Ibrahim and Usman (2021) and Aliyu (2018). These studies emphasized the transformative role of technical and entrepreneurial training in boosting employability and income. Yet, the marginal significance of education and family size in the regression model also reflects contextual socio-economic pressures as noted in Dauda et al. (2019) where larger family responsibilities and limited education may still constrain the programme's effectiveness for some participants.

Importantly, the study also supports observations by Kayode et al. (2024) and Aminu and Aliyu (2024) that many post-beneficiaries hold negative perceptions of programme sustainability, especially due to irregular stipend payments, poor monitoring, and political interference. These issues echo national concerns documented by Robert et al. (2023) and Balogun (2019), who found that although N-Power has made localized economic impacts, its overall contribution to national poverty reduction remains statistically insignificant without major administrative reforms. Furthermore, gender and regional disparities continue to influence the programme's reach. While rural women experienced notable improvements, as noted by Eze and Nnadi (2021), access and participation were often limited in more conservative regions due to socio-cultural barriers, confirming the findings of Amanie and Elenwa (2024).

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the N-Power programme has made a meaningful contribution to poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Niger State, particularly the 2020 Batch A, B, and C cohorts. The programme enhanced the employment prospects of many youths, improved their income levels, and positively impacted their standard of living. However, despite these gains, a significant number of post-beneficiaries still faced challenges such as lack of access to startup capital, difficulty securing permanent jobs, and limited post-programme support systems. These obstacles have the potential to erode the short-term benefits of the intervention if not adequately addressed. In light of these findings, it is recommended that the government provide post-exit financial support, such as grants or soft loans, to help beneficiaries start or sustain income-generating ventures. Additionally, integrating a mentorship and monitoring component into the programme will help guide beneficiaries toward productive outcomes. There is also a need for stronger linkages with private sector employers and business incubation centers to promote job placement and entrepreneurial development. To sustain the impact of the N-Power initiative, beneficiaries with outstanding performance could be considered for permanent absorption into government services, while future programme designs should ensure better alignment between acquired skills and deployment sectors.

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