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## **Impact Assessment of the N-power Scheme: A Study of Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State**

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### **Abstract**

*The objectives of this study were to examine the impact of the N power scheme in employment generation, economic wellbeing of beneficiaries and job skills enhancement of beneficiaries in the Cross River south senatorial district. The research design adopted for this study was the survey design. The researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique in selecting sample from the population of study. A sample size of two hundred and fifty respondents were selected for study. The researcher utilized the questionnaire in gathering quantitative data for the study. The hypotheses that were stated for study were tested using pearson product moment correlation. The analysis was run on the Statistical Package for social science (SPSS). The results of the study indicated that there is a positive significant relationship between the N power scheme and the following variables, economic wellbeing, job skill enhancement and employment generation. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that Government should introduce mandatory training and workshops in areas such as ICT and agriculture for volunteers to increase their employability after the expiration of the scheme.. It was also recommended that Government should provide interest free loans to interested volunteers to start up their small or medium scale enterprises. This can be conveniently deducted from their monthly stipends.*

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### **Introduction**

Poverty and unemployment are twin evils bedeviling the Nigeria state today. Reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2005) shows how the “population in poverty has maintain a steady increase from 17.7 million in 1988 to 66.7 million in 2004.” In 2010, the national Bureau of Statistics reported that 60.9% of Nigerians were living in poverty. 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, posits that more than half of the Nigerian youths population in the country are unemployed.

Poverty and unemployment rate continue to climb vertically, translating in to social problems of more monumental and complication proportions, attempting to defy popular government interventions geared towards ameliorating them. Every government since 1999, has had their signature poverty reduction or alleviation whatever appellation. The government of then President Olesegun Aremu Obasanjo (1999-2007) initiated the National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) to alleviate poverty. According to Anyebe (2015) NAPEP was established in 2010 as the primary agency of the federal government to eradicate extreme poverty in Nigeria. The core programme under the scheme includes the Youth Empowerment Scheme and National Resource development and Conservation Scheme. The author further disclosed that despite the huge financial implication of the schemes, poverty and youth unemployment continued unabated.

Another signature poverty eradication scheme was the Subsidy Reinvestment Scheme (SURE-P), designed and implemented by the then president Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan administration (2012-2014). The core programme of SURE-P with regards to poverty reduction includes; the Mass transit Scheme, Vocational Training Scheme and Community Service/ Women and Youth Employment (CSWYE). This initiative has been severally criticized for lack of transparency, and large scale corruption. Abu (2015) in a study on Subsidy Reinvestment Programme and Employment Generation in Nigeria (2012-2014) concluded that the programme has not led to employment generation in Nigeria youth unemployment and wide scale poverty in the country still remain high.

The Administration of President Muhammadu Buhari designed and implemented the ongoing National Social Investment Scheme (NSIP) as strategy for combating poverty and unemployment. The NSIP scheme was created to enable citizens exit from the twin evils of poverty and unemployment as earlier mentioned through capacity building, investment and direct financial support. The programme consists of four major components include the Job Creation and Youth Empowerment (N- Power), National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) and Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP). NSIP generally aimed at increasing the poor and vulnerable household with access income/livelihood by providing access to targeted funds, thereby improving household ability to absorb economic shock.

The N-Power scheme specifically is the employability and enhancement programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria, aimed at imbuing the learn- work enterprise culture in youth between the ages 18-34 (N-SIP 2018). The programme is available for graduate and non-graduates. The graduate's category is further divided into three areas namely, the N-Teach, N-Health and N-Agro. For the non-graduates category, N-Build Scheme is geared towards equipping its beneficiaries with necessary and meaningful skills to be self-employed.

Based on the forgoing, this paper is limited to the N-Power scheme with a view to accessing its impact in ameliorating youth employment and poverty respectively.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Poverty and unemployment remains one of the biggest social problems in Nigeria today. Available data from NBS (2010) shows that more than half of Nigerians population is currently living in poverty And remain a worrisome phenomenon demanding urgent national attention. This is not unconnected to the fact that the poverty rate continues And had remain unabated in society which gives room for other social vices such as armed robbery, burglary etc as corroborated by Olajide and Diah (2017) reports which there asserted that insecurity in Nigeria can be linked with growing poverty rate.

To tackle this problem, successive government has implemented a range of measures, including NAPEP, SURE-P and currently the NSIP initiative. The NSIP initiative addresses a range of social problems such as curbing poverty, unemployment and increasing school enrolment. The N-power initiative which is the job creation component of the policy aims at reducing poverty and unemployment and is targeted at the Nigerian youth. However creating a policy and its implementation to achieve set goals appear to be mutually exclusive in the Nigeria context as efforts by successive governments to contain the excruciating poverty and monumental unemployment initiatives geared toward alleviating the precarious situation surrounding the Nigerian youths in a bid to enhance the quality of life have been ended in fiasco as a consequence of abysmal and porous implementation of the said programmes.

The aim of this study is to assess the impact of the N-power scheme in three salient areas via employment generation, economic well-being and skills/job enhancement.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study is aimed at accessing the socio-economic impact of the N-Power scheme on the beneficiaries. Specifically, the study is geared towards ascertaining;

- i. The impact of N- Power scheme on employment generation
- ii. The impact of N-Power schemes on the economic wellbeing of beneficiaries and
- iii. The impact of N - Power scheme on skill-job enhancement

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study

- i. Does the N – Power scheme lead to employment generation?
- ii. To what extent does the N – Power scheme significantly affects economic well being of beneficiaries? and
- iii. Where there exist any significant relationship between the N – Power scheme and skill – job enhancement?

### **Statement of Hypothesis**

- i. There is no significant deference between the N- PowerScheme and employment generation
- ii. There is no significant relationship between the N -Power scheme and the economic well being of beneficiaries and
- iii. There is no significant relationship between the N - Power scheme and skill – job enhancement

### **Literature Review**

#### **Youth Unemployment in Nigeria**

Youth unemployment is becoming a pervasive problem across the world. According to Longe (2017) even the most developed nations have not shown exception to this frightful social problem. 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 2016) depicts that a total figure of 52 million peoples within the economically active population of Nigerians are jobless. There exit a plethora of factors that explains the astronomical increase of unemployment in Nigeria. The Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN, 2016) relate the unemployment scenario in Nigeria to lack of national employment policy, sub-optimal quality of graduates, educational system not tailored and aligned to industrial needs and inappropriate educational curricula inter alia. In a related vein, 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. Worthy of amplification is the poorly coordinated interventionist schemes aimed at mitigating the unemployment problems which accords with 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 unemployment

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. Unemployment is an albatross in any society as well a social problem with unprecedented and uncomplimentary consequences. Oluwajodu, Baauwe, Greyting & Kleyhans (2015) states that unemployment reduces economic well fairs, output and erode human capital. The implication is that the economic benefit that should have accrued from the maximization of the human capital is usually lost. ALSO, unemployment leads to social vices like armed robbery, kidnapping, fraud etc.

This is not to undermine gene wing and concerted efforts aimed at containing the ravaging monster unemployment that have colored the pages of history books in Nigeria as enunciated by many scholarly works and researches.

### **Poverty Profile in Nigeria**

The poverty rate in Nigeria is alarming and worrisome. This is because despite the potentials of Nigeria in terms of here Natural, human resources and numerical strength poverty is endemic and engulfs a large proportion of her population. Orokpo, Haruna and Mutong (2018) stated that “the issue of poverty in Nigeria is a paradox, a case of poverty in the midst of plenty” . Similarly, Gonba (2006) remarked that the on human poverty index 1999, placed Nigeria among the 25 poorest in the world. according to UNDP (2010) report, the population in poverty is pegged at 68.7 million as at 2004 and in the last quota of 2016, the NBS reported that about 112 million Nigerian representing 67.1% of the country total population of 160 then are living below poverty level (Vanguard, 2016). Generally, the available statistics’ on the incidence of poverty in Nigeria revealed certain characteristics. These Include’ that the majority poor in Nigeria reside in the rural areas; that poverty is higher in the Northern part of the country the South and lastly, that though there exist disparity in the poverty rates between North and South/ rural and urban areas, the urban slums dwellers are the most deprived group in the country. Summarily, poverty in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors which includes; unstable political history, government corruption and mismanagement, lack of coherent polices formulation, implementation evaluation, over dependent on oil, poor infrastructures’ inter alia. Over the years, government has reacted strongly to the rising poverty trend in the country. Ogwumike (2015) stated that, several poverty reduction approaches have been formulated and implemented all with the objective or attempts geared towards arresting the beleaguered poverty situation in the country. From 1999 till date, some of the poverty reduction measures includes the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), SURE- P, NSIPS etc. despite the litanies of programmes on poverty reduction in Nigeria, it has been observed that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is exacerbating rather tha ameliorated.

### **N-Power Schem: An Over View.**

N-Power is a scheme under the National Social Investments Programme of the Nigerian federal government geared towards job creation; alleviate poverty and empowerment initiatives through volunteering services. It is also aimed at imbibing on Nigerian youths the learn-work entrepreneurship culture between the ages of 18-35 (FGN 2018).

According to Olawole (2018), the goals of the programme includes; reducing the rate of unemployment in the country, facilitate the transfer of entrepreneurial, technical skills and employability ability and to bring solution active public service and government diversification policy. The programme is divided into three components viz, n-tech, n-health, and n-agro as well as other subsidiary non-graduate scheme as n-build, n-knowledge and n-teach respectively.

N- Teach

Beneficiaries under this sub scheme will serve in public schools as auxiliary teachers for a period not less than two years subject to modification by the appropriate authority. The aim is to help the beneficiaries gain relevant work experience and mould the better for further challenges as may be determine by the political and economic climate.

#### N-Health

Volunteers under this group will be deployed to serve as public health assistants in government owned health facilities as well as provide basic health diagnostic services in the area of primary assignment

#### N-Agro

The youths deployed under this group will serve as researchers and the local farmers in a bit to educate them on contemporary farming techniques and innovation to boost agricultural productivity thereby achieving the objective of food sufficiency.

The federal government (2018) lists some of the recorded achievements of N-Power scheme to include;

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### Systems theory

This theory views government as system with input coming from the masses in the form of demands for economic and social well-being as well as the provision of basic necessities of life by the government for the overall benefit of the citizenry. The government serves as the processing unit which takes inputs in form of demands, processes them and sent out outputs in form of authoritative decisions in form of policy initiatives in the instant geared towards poverty reduction. The theory shows how government reacts to people's plight in terms of the provision of the basic necessities of life. The theory highlight hoe demands of the peoples are presented to government, government actions on the said demands and the out being the prograame that will enhance the well-being of the peoples.

### **Research Methodology**

To generate quantitative data for this study, the survey research design was employed. Osuala (2017) viewed survey as has been oriented towards the determination of the status of a given phenomenon rather than towards the isolation of causative factors. The justification for adopting the survey design was its ability to allow the researchers investigate problems that has to do with eliciting response from large number of respondents.

The population of this study consists of one thousand; seven hundred and fifty beneficiaries of the N-power scheme residing in the cross river south senatorial district. The researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique in selecting the sample for this study. Odu (2007) defined purposive sampling as technique as the use of judgment and deliberate efforts to obtained representative sample by including typical areas or groups in the sample selected. This technique was adopted due to the nature and character of the variable under study. The researcher administered the questionnaire on respondents at their places of primary assignment (PPA). A sample of two hundred and fifty respondents was selected from the population of the study. When the sample was reached, the researcher ended field survey

The researcher adopted both the primary and secondary methods of data collection. The questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. it was structured based on the objective of the study while the secondary sources includes journal, web articles etc

Pearson correlation test statistic was utilized in testing the hypothesis. The analysis was run on the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20.

## Results and discussion of findings

### Hypothesis one

The first hypothesis sought to examine if there was a significant relationship between the N-power scheme and employment generation. Results of the analysis indicated that there exists a positive significant relationship between the scheme and employment generation. In other words, the scheme led to positive changes in job creation. According to FGN[2018], the N-power programme has provided a veritable platform for engaging unemployed graduates. The scheme has engaged about five hundred thousand graduates in different sectors of the economy such as education, agriculture and health. Interview with some beneficiaries of the scheme showed that they have been engaged at their places of primary appointment in different capacities.

**Table 1**

		NPOWE R	Employment generation
Npower	Pearson Correlation	1	.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	241	241
Employment generaeration	Pearson Correlation	.530**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	241	241

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

### Hypothesis two

The second hypothesis examined if there was a significant relationship between the N-power scheme and economic well-being. Results of the analysis indicated that there exists a positive significant relationship between the scheme and economic well-being. In other words, the scheme led to positive changes in job creation. According to FGN [2018], the N-power programme has provided a veritable platform for engaging unemployed graduates. The scheme has engaged about five hundred thousand graduates in different sectors of the economy such as education, agriculture and health. Interview with some beneficiaries of the scheme showed that they have been engaged at their places of primary appointment in different capacities

**Table 2**

		NPOWE R	Economic wellbeing
Npower	Pearson Correlation	1	.326**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	241	241
Economic wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.326**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	241	241

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

### Hypothesis three

The third hypothesis examined if there was a significant relationship between the N-power scheme and job skill enhancement. Results of the analysis indicated that there exists a positive significant relationship between the scheme and job skill enhancement. In other words, the scheme led to positive changes in job creation. According to FGN[2018], the N-power programme has provided a veritable platform for engaging unemployed graduates. The scheme has engaged about five hundred thousand graduates in different sectors of the economy such as education, agriculture and health. Interview with some beneficiaries of the scheme showed that they have been engaged at their places of primary appointment in different capacities

**Table 3**

		N-power	Job enhancement skill
N-power	Pearson Correlation	1	.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	235	229
Job enhancement skill	Pearson Correlation	.385**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	229	229

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

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Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following

1. Government should introduce mandatory training and workshops in areas such as ICT and agriculture for volunteers to increase their employability after the expiration of the scheme.
2. Government should provide interest free loans to interested volunteers to start up their small or medium scale enterprises. This can be conveniently deducted from their monthly stipends.
3. Government should ramp up pressures on state governments to absorb some of the volunteers in a more permanent capacity in their civil servi

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