N-POWER PROGRAMME AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN ONDO STATE: 2016-2020

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the N-Power Programme and Poverty reduction in Ondo State of Nigeria between 2016 to 2020 in order to ascertain its impact on the general society where it was implemented and if it has achieved its stated objective. System theory was employed to explain the relationship in the study, while Survey research design was adopted which entails the collection of data from both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were gathered via questionnaires. The population of N-Power Volunteers in the three LGAs selected formed the total population of the study and the Taro Yamane method was designed to determine the sample size of 369. Simple ramdom technique was employed in the study with Chi- Square to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study show that N-Power Programme has significant impact on poverty reduction in Ondo State and Nigeria at large beyond the volunteers Base on this, the study recommends that N-Power Programme should be pragmatically tailored towards skill acquisition and entrepreneur that can give birth to self-reliance after the expiration of the programme. Second, N-Power Programme should be expanded with legal backing by the legislature in order to prevent political influence.

1. Introduction

Over the years, unemployment and poverty have become life acid with a sour taste in the developing economies as they cast shadow over the development. Mutiullah (2010:6) justified this statement by saying that "unemployment is one of developmental problems that faces every developing economy in the 21st century. Unemployment and the incidence of poverty have engulfed the economy of this country in such a way that youths and young graduates are living in perpetual hopelessness". The Nigeria universities and other tertiary institutions are producing graduates each year without the hope of any job, and this situation has resulted to different form of social vices such as; banditry, kidnappings, oil bunkering, pipe vandalism, militancy, political thuggery, prostitution, illegal trafficking, cultism and many others (Odeh and Okoye 2014).

As a matter of fact, the misery and the frustration of the citizens foisted a state of hopelessness and the majority of the youths resulted to any means to sustain their life either crook or counterfeit. That is why we continue to experience internet fraud and all sort of criminalities.

The consequences of unemployment obviously reach beyond the person out of work, touching children, spouses, the economy and society at large (Duncan, 2001). Many of these effects can be traced backed to the psychological consequences of unemployment. Besides economic hardship and partly as a result of it, many unemployed persons suffer lowered self-esteem, depression, anxiety, shame, physical illness, marital problems and isolation from family and friends perhaps because they cannot afford to socialize or because they do not want to burden others with their problems or they are ashamed (Micheal, 1968). In most cases, isolation from society may also result if the duration of unemployment is long. People begin to feel alienated and see the nation's political and social institution as callous and uncaring.

A negative social outcome of unemployment is severe and evil poverty. Two manifestations of the numerous social and economic components of poverty are a lack of income and insufficient productive resources to sustain a life. The following are all symptoms of poverty: inadequate housing, a hazardous environment, social discrimination, increased morbidity and mortality as a result of illness, limited access to quality education and essential services, and starvation and malnutrition (Akomolafe, Agunbiade & Ndayako, 2018). In reality, poverty cannot be defined in an absolute sense (Agumagu, 2000). One definition of poverty is that individuals are impoverished when they are unable to fulfil their most basic needs, as different individuals have varying perspectives on what it means to be impoverished.

Its also very important for us to be informed that designing good and developmental policy that can mitigate the excessive incident of poverty is not a big problem in Nigeria, but how to concretize it to achieve its stated objective become problematic. Almost all of the successive governments of Niger have developed a series of targeted programs, plans, and policies that are designed to cultivate the country's abundant young (Jimoh 2014). Many Nigerians continue to endure the severe reality of poverty, despite the establishment of numerous Poverty Alleviation programs with the stated objective of combating poverty in Nigeria. In reality, the proportion of the population that lives in destitution has increased.

Poverty reduction has always been an issue confronting every government which every reasonable government strives to tackle ((Okoroafor & Akomolafe, 2018; Zoaka and Akpen, 2012). The fight against poverty and unemployment is a key component of development of any country. The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari initiated anti-Poverty Programme in Nigeria which was tagged N-Power. Under the Social Investment Programmes (SIP), the N-Power Programme is a job creation and empowerment initiative. Its objective is to mitigate destitution and unemployment among Nigeria's youth and graduates. By establishing a framework for pervasive and applicable employment, skill development, and acquisition, it addresses the issue of youth unemployment and connects its foundation and outcomes to the enhancement of insufficient public services and the expansion of the economy as a whole (Bisong 2019).

The N-power initiative attempted to make up for previous attempts to alleviate poverty by providing five hundred thousand (500,000) graduates with a direct job.

Statement of the Problem

Only little attention have been devoted to the studies of N-Power Programme by researchers with a submission that the programme has contributed to poverty reduction of the volunteers alone. However, the studies have neglected the effect of the programme on the general society where it was implemented and neither has there been any research work related to subject of inquiry in the selected local government areas of Ondo State which make the study to be relevant. It is on this note that this study seeks to assess N-power programme and poverty reduction in Ondo state of Nigeria in order to ascertain the extent to which it has achieved its intended stated objectives of reducing poverty

2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Public Policy has been conceptualized in various ways by different scholars, the denotation and connotations have been the subject of disputation in the literature. To this regard, there is no one mined among the analysts as to what the correct definitions of the public policy should be. The controversy is over the boundary of what should constitute public policy. A cursory examination of a few conceptions and operationalizations will therefore suffice.

Ujo (2011) conceptualized Public Policy as a government decision or non-decision designed to deal with various social problems such as kidnapping, armed robbery, electoral violence and oil bunkering. According to this scholar, the two important features of this definition are government decisions or non-decision and social problems. The governmental decisions are aimed at providing solution to particular problem. Howlett and Cashore (2014) have a similar view with Ujo by saying that Public Policies are government actions which contain goals and the means to achieve them. One fact about these definitions is that, in Policy making, it must involve both a technical and political process of articulating and matching actors' goals and the means, and that, Public Policies are specifically designed to prosecute specific societal problems.

Sapru (2004) conceptualizes Public Policy as a course of action taken or adopted by those in power in pursuit of certain goals or objectives. According to this scholar, there is an emphasis on a goal which government intends to achieve. These could be on poverty, unemployment, health issues, education etc. Government therefore adopts a policy to address such problem. It is then we begin to see poverty reduction programme, educational policy, health care policy, economic policy etc. Government attends or influences whatever happens in the societies through the repertoire of policy, and it indicates the direction towards which action is sought. It involves a deliberate choice of action by the government to attain those goals and objectives.

Concept of Poverty

Poverty needs to be understood. It is not a state of being, but a state of mind. Poverty thinking needs to be dealt with to prosper. Ray (2019) opines that Poverty causes people to have a sense of lack in everything. It controls the way they think and acts. It is of the view of Ray that poverty influences the way people reason and it has the capacity to hold captive people who possess remarkable abilities. Poverty is a condition in which a person or community is deprived of or lacks the essentials for a minimum standard of living (Ray, 2019). Poverty involves the lack of resources that are essential for dignity and living, it encompasses a social-economic structure that keeps people deprived.

Chelliah and Sudarehan (1999) have noted that the precise definition of poverty has been the subject of significant debate. However, they argue that in common understanding, poverty is defined as a lowness of income that makes it impossible for a family to obtain and enjoy the necessities of living, such as food, clothing, shelter, and water. They informed us that the previous conceptual description of poverty is income poverty, which provides a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Other forms of deprivation related to healthcare, schooling, sanitation, and accident insurance must also be taken into account. The individuals who are experiencing destitution are the most suitable individuals to enquire about its definition. If you were to enquire about the meaning of poverty to low-income individuals, they would likely respond that it involves the absence of food, water, and a secure residence. It signifies the incapacity to comprehend and a persistent illness. Poverty results in a lack of opportunities for both you and your offspring, a sense of powerlessness in the face of those in positions of authority, and a limited ability to influence one's own life. Narayah, Petesch, and Shan (2011) observed that this could result in a life in which one is perpetually concerned about their safety. Streeten (2008) has a similar view from the prejudiced assessment that poverty must best be defined by the real pauper themselves or by the communities where poor and unlucky people lived . Streeten believed that those that tasted poverty and feel the effect would have the best conceptualization of poverty rather than people who never tasted it.

In another way round, poverty is not a lack of money but a lack of idea. The idea in the sense

that, when a community, nation or individual lacks idea needed to translate the available resources into development, such individual or nation remain in perpetual poverty. Nigeria remains in a vicious circle of poverty because she lacks the idea to utilize or translate her various human and material resources into development that can generate more employment opportunity for their citizenry. In a nutshell, poverty is a multifaceted concept that encompasses all facets of life. It cuts across health, food or material, possession; it could be poverty in mind which affect reasoning or idea. It could be psychological poverty that affects people's behaviour toward developmental policies.

Theoretical Framework

System theory has been adopted in this investigation. The system theory of policy formation is founded on the Eastonian framework for political system analysis. System theory posits that policy is the outcome of the political system's interaction with a variety of environmental factors. According to the theory, political activity is comprised of three primary components: output, the political system, and the environment. The objective conditions and forces that comprise the environment generate demand and supporting inputs.

The study aligns itself to this theory on the ground that N-Power Programme is seen as public policy or output of the political system. N-Power Programme is being designed by the political system in response to the articulation needs, problems generated and aspirations in the environment

Here, the environment is seen as general society of Nigeria, while the citizens are the forces that generated demand and support. Demands are what citizens, groups or individual want from the political system and this can be expressed through clamoring for change that can reduce the incident of poverty and cater for unemployed citizens in the society. While support are the attitude and action of citizens to the political system and allow it to continue working, this is also expressed through decision making of the citizens (individual and groups) in the cause of voting in the election period of 2015 rather than been political apathy. Demands and support are therefore input to the political system.

Political system according to this theory, consist of the institutions, process and personnel of government. This is equivalent to legislative and executive arm of government. The political system is a processor or converter of input into output. This implies that, the legislative and executive arms of government processed the aspiration and the demands of the citizens from the environment and convert it into output or authoritative allocation of values which are public policies. Therefore, N-Power Programme is the outcome of policy making of the government. It is the government decision that is being implemented as anti-poverty to effect changes in the society.

The public policy or government decision will invariably come out as output, which will also influence future inputs into the system through feedback. This imply that if the impact of N – Power Programme in the environment is, positive and able to effect the desire changes as to reduce poverty level and unemployment in the society, people will repose their confidence in the government of All Progressive Congress (APC), and keep on feeding the system with the input that will sustain their government. But if otherwise, people will lose trust and stop their inputs to the system and initiate change against the government of APC.

In any political system, individual and the member of the community have their roles to play to furnish the system with their inputs so as to make it functioning. Likewise, the government has its own role to play in making and concretize a public policy that can transform the country's economy where poverty and unemployment could be blown off. It is after that we can talk about good governance in the society. The theory is relevance to the study in the sense that, it enhances the understanding and stand as an operational tool to further explain the circumstances that surround the government commitment and enthusiasm in formulating and implementing N-Power Programme as poverty reduction programme.

3. Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is based on survey research design which entails the collection of data from both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were gathered via questionnaires from the respondents. The study was carried out in the Ondo state of Nigeria, The survey location

comprises three LGAs in Ondo State. From the 18 LGAs of Ondo State, 3 LGA were purposively selected, each from the three senatorial districts based on the political and geographical consideration and their active participation in N-Power Programme. The LGAs are; Owo LGA, Akure South LGA and Ilaje LGA respectively**.**

The population of N-Power volunteers in the three LGAs selected formed the population sample. The N-Power Volunteers in Owo LGA was 746, while that of Akure South LGA was 3025 and Ilaje LGA was 1109 respectively. The selection of samples across the population will help us to have balanced information about the impact of the N-Power Programme on poverty reduction in Ondo state and as well reflect the opinion of the population. Therefore, the population of both the three LGAs of N-Power volunteers is 4880. This was the total study population from which samples was selected. Based on the population of the study, Taro Yamane method for samples size calculation was formulated to determine the sample size from a given population of three LGA selected.

n=N/(1+N(e)2)

where:

n = Signifies the Sample Size (unknown)

N=Signifies the Population under Study (4880)

e= Signifies the margin error (0.05)

Substituting the numbers in the formula given, therefore:

: n=4880/(1+4880 (0.05)2

n= 4880/(1+4880 (0.0025

n=4880/(1+12.2)

n=4880/ 13.2

n=369\

Therefore the samples size of 369 respondents was selected for questionnaire administration.

Summary of sample size

LGAs	The population of the study (LGA)	Sample %	Sample size
Akure LGA	3025	3025/4880 x369=228	228
Owo LGA	746	746/4880x369=57	57
Ilaje LGA	1109	1109/1500x369=84	84
Total	4880		369

Source: Author's calculation based on the population of the three LGAs selected for the study

Akure South LGA being the largest N-Power volunteer provides a sample size of 228 respondents, while Owo LGA provides a sample size of 57 respondents and Ilaje LGA provides a sample size of 84 respondents. The study used mean as descriptive statistics and Chi-Square to test the hypothesis.

Sampling Techniques

To achieve the stated samples in pursuit of the objective of the study, a simple random sampling technique was adopted. Simple random sampling was employed in selecting the respondents for the quantitative data via

questionnaire administration. The choice of this sampling technique is necessitated by the nature of the study and since the research is aimed at carrying out an assessment of the N-Power Programme and poverty reduction in Ondo State

4.0. Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses for this study which are stated in the null form are thereby tested with chi-square.

4.1: Ho_1: N-Power Programme does not have a significant impact on poverty reduction in Ondo State.

Table 4.1 Test Statistics	
	Has the N-Power programme reduced the poverty level in Ondo State?
Chi-Square	32.994[a]
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Source: Field Survey, March 2024

The Chi-square result shows that N-power has a statistically significant impact on poverty level in Ondo State. From Table 4.1, p-value (0.000) is less than (0.05) which means H_0 is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted thereby we conclude that the N-power programme has a significant impact on poverty and unemployment reduction in Ondo State.

Decision Rule:

The p- value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 and X^2 tabulated (5.02) is less than X^2 calculated (32.994) in Table 1. Therefore, we reject H_0 and accept the alternative. This implies that the N-power programme has a significant impact on unemployment reduction in Ondo state.

4.2: Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: N-Power programme does not have a significant impact on the people of Ondo State other than volunteer

Table 2: Has N-Power Programme improved socio-economic development of the State via buying and selling of the volunteers.

Table 2 Test Statistics	
	Has N-Power Programme improved the socio-economic development of the State via buying and selling of the volunteers?
Chi-Square	153.778[a]
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 173.5.	

Source: Field Survey, March 2024.

Decision Rule:

Table 4.2 shows the Chi-square result, the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 and X^2 tabulated (5.02) is less than X^2 calculated (153.778). Hence, we reject H_0 and accept the alternative. This implies that the N-Power programme has a significant impact on the people of Ondo State other than volunteers.

4.2: Policy Implications and Discussion of Results

The view of the respondent indicated that N-power Programme had made a credible contribution to the reduction of poverty on the volunteers in the State. From the study reviewed, (Abin 2008) look into the impact of the N-power Programme, implementation and the contribution to the social economic well-being of the beneficiaries at Akwanga metropolis of Nasarawa State, and the study found out that N-power Programme has contributed to the financial, material social wellbeing of the beneficiaries. The result of the finding in this study is an affirmative complement to the submission of (Abin, 2008) that the N-power programme has provided financial empowerment, reduced the social mess of unemployment, reduced over-reliance on parents on daily living and that has improved the livelihood of the volunteers. The direct implication to the volunteers is the reduction of poverty.

One important gap that this study intends to fill is the effect of the N-power Programme on the study area of Ondo State. The study revealed that apart from the volunteers who felt so much impact of the N-power programme, the society at which the programme was implemented also felt the impact as well. The view of respondents indicated that N-power Programme has so much impact on the people of Ondo State that is, the study area other than volunteers who are the target population. The study found out that N-power Programme relieved parents of a financial burden on the volunteers. This implies that even the so call parents who didn't participate directly in the N-power Programme are indirectly benefited from the programme via their enlisted children.

It is also observed by the study that the N-power programme improved the social economic development of the State through buying and selling of the volunteers. The finding indicated that there is more money in circulation through the N-power Programme source due to the volunteers' transaction in the society or state.

In addition to that, the study also revealed that N-power Programme also improved the social responsibility of the volunteers in the state. This implies that with the help of the N-power programme, majorities of the unemployed graduates who felt alienated and see the state' political and social institution as callous and uncaring, and that who have concluded that they are not obliged to the state, have now developed a sense of belonging and have an obligation to work to consolidate the political and social institution and to cooperate with other individual and organization for the benefit of the state at large. N-power Programme has created a consciousness in individual volunteers a duty they have to perform to maintain a balance between the economy and the society.

The study also observed from the opinion of the respondents that N-power Programme enhanced social security in the state. The programme provides to individual household volunteers to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security to unemployed graduates. N-power Programme as indicated by the study is a federal government programme designed to provide partial income for young graduates that are jobless. Therefore, N-power paid out money through social security programmes, and the majority of the volunteers are now living on social security. The study found out that N-power Programme has fairly reduced the poverty level in the study area of Ondo State; no matter how small it is, majorities of the volunteers tapped into the opportunity and became an entrepreneur. On the overall assessment of the N-power Programme on poverty reduction in Ondo State, the study revealed that the programme has made a fair significant impact on poverty reduction

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study examines the impact of N-Power Programme on the study area of Ondo State and it was established that N-power Programme has impacted and fairly contributed to the poverty reduction in Ondo State and Nigeria at large. The study further concludes that Npower Programme has significant impact on poverty reduction on both volunteers and the general society in Ondo State where it was implemented and that there is no doubt that N-power Programme is an anti-poverty programme that has capacity to reduce the incident of poverty if pragmatically tailored towards skill acquisition

and entrepreneur that can give birth to self-reliance otherwise; the poverty level will remain its status quo in Nigeria.

5.2 Recommendations

It is my sincere belief that for N-power Programme's mandate and its cardinal objective to be realized and achieved, the government and the authorities concerned should continue to pursue the full realization of the mandates and the objective of the programme. Given the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations as follows;

i. For the N-power programme to be able to realize and achieve its cardinal objective of poverty reduction holistically there will be a need for it to be pragmatically tailored towards skill acquisition and entrepreneur, such skill will provide self-reliance after the expiration of the programme.

ii. A monetary fixed salary policy (MFS) should be introduced into the programme; the monthly stipend designated to individuals volunteers should be divided into two while part should be fixed by the government into individuals volunteers' bank accounts till, after the expiration of the programme and thereafter, the government shall complement the little fixed money for the volunteers so that they can start a small scale business with it.

iii. The stipend of the volunteers should be increased to be commensurate with the current inflation situation in the country, and to be sufficient for the monetary fixed salary policy recommended.

iv. N-power should be reviewed and expanded with legal backing by the legislature to prevent political parties' influence because of change of government. This will lead to the continuation and sustainability of the programme.

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