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## Contributions of N-power programmes to youth empowerment in Maiduguri metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study assesses the contributions of the N-power programme to youth empowerment in Maiduguri Metropolis, with a specific focus on employment generation, poverty reduction, and skill acquisition. The research examined the N-Power Programme's impact on employment generation, its contributions to poverty reduction among beneficiaries, and its role in enhancing skill acquisition. Three research questions guided this study. To support this research, a comprehensive review of related literature was conducted. Methodologically, a self-designed questionnaire was employed, and the study adopted a survey research design. The study's population consisted of 23,536 individuals, with a sample size of 379. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics, including frequency count, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, with the results presented in tabular form. Drawing from established theoretical frameworks such as Human Capital Theory, Structural-Functionalism Theory, Empowerment Theory, and Social Capital Theory, the research explores how the N-Power Programme empowers young individuals by providing them with essential resources, skills, and opportunities. The findings of this study reveal that the N-Power Programme has a positive impact on employment generation among its beneficiaries, effectively addressing the pressing issue of youth unemployment. Additionally, the program has moderately reduced poverty by offering employment opportunities and facilitating skill development, thereby improving the economic well-being of its participants. The study also highlights the program's moderate impact on skill acquisition, emphasizing the crucial role of skill development in empowering individuals to take control of their lives and enhance their prospects. To further strengthen the program's impact, several recommendations are provided, including the establishment of partnerships with the private sector, the incorporation of financial literacy and entrepreneurship training, and the implementation of mentorship systems. In conclusion, this study underscores the vital role of initiatives like the N-Power Programme in addressing developmental challenges related to youth empowerment, unemployment, and poverty reduction in emerging societies. These initiatives contribute significantly to sustainable development and overall well-being. As the program continues to evolve, it is essential to adapt and refine its strategies to effectively address the evolving challenges and opportunities facing the youth in Nigeria and similar contexts.

**Keywords:** N-power programme; Maiduguri; Youth empowerment; Poverty; N-Power

### 1. Introduction

N-Power is a scheme operating under the National Social Investments Programme of the Nigerian Federal Government. Its primary objectives encompass job creation for graduates, poverty alleviation, and empowerment initiatives achieved through volunteer services. The initiative caters to both graduates and non-graduates and is expressly designed to instill

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in Nigerian youth, aged between 18 and 35, a culture of learning, working, and entrepreneurship (FGN 2018). N-Power addresses the pressing issue of youth unemployment by establishing a framework for large-scale, relevant skill acquisition and development. It aligns its core objectives with rectifying deficiencies in public services and catalyzing economic growth (Eminue, 2015; Igbuzor, 2016).

Nigeria, endowed with abundant human and natural resources and boasting a robust economy ranking second in Africa behind South Africa, paradoxically grapples with a substantial number of unemployed citizens. Recent data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that the unemployment rate in Nigeria reached 33 percent in the first quarter of 2022. This stark statistic implies that over 100 million Nigerians, out of an estimated population of 218 million (according to the National Population Commission's 2022 estimate), live below the poverty line. Notably, in Nigeria, poverty is intricately intertwined with unemployment (Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012). These figures underscore a disconcerting reality: despite the country's impressive \$504 billion GDP (World Bank, 2021), poverty and unemployment persist. Moreover, it's disquieting that Nigerian youths constitute the largest demographic of the unemployed in the nation (NBS, 2017). As highlighted in Abu's 2015 study, the absence of youth employment represents one of Nigeria's paramount challenges. After completing their education, many graduates find themselves searching for jobs that are simply unavailable. Unemployment has shown an upward trajectory over the years, with over 50 percent of young Nigerians being unemployed. The NBS's 2022 report underscores the magnitude of the issue, revealing that 53 percent of youths are currently unemployed. These numbers are indeed substantial.

Employment is undeniably one of the most pivotal social and economic issues in Nigeria. It typically involves a contractual relationship between two parties: the employer and the employee. Importantly, poverty reduction extends beyond mere income augmentation; it revolves around creating an environment where individuals can lead healthy, creative lives, ensuring access to necessities like food, shelter, and clothing, while safeguarding their rights to freedom, dignity, self-esteem, and protection from government and community mistreatment. It ultimately aims to facilitate active participation in society. Conversely, poverty alleviation encompasses a set of comprehensive measures, combining economic and humanitarian approaches, with the ultimate objective of lifting people permanently out of poverty. Skill acquisition, on the other hand, can be defined as the process of training individuals or groups to acquire knowledge and skills essential for self-sustainability.

The challenge of inadequate youth employment has far-reaching socioeconomic, political, and moral consequences. This predicament has exacerbated the chronic and escalating issue of poverty in Nigeria. Unemployment and poverty, intertwined in a paradoxical manner, have persisted since Nigeria's inception as a nation. The Federal Office of Statistics (now Federal Bureau of Statistics) reported that between the late 1970s and early 1990s, Nigeria's poverty level was at 27 percent. Shockingly, this figure had surged to 65 percent by 2022, at a time when many countries were moving towards eradicating poverty within their borders (Osagie, 2017). Several factors contributed to this alarming increase in poverty, including the mismanagement of the nation's limited resources by corrupt leaders, prolonged military rule, a shift from agriculture to an oil-based economy, and an unstable economic environment (Eminue, 2015; Igbuzor, 2016).

N-Power, a youth empowerment initiative sponsored by the Federal Government of Nigeria, addresses the pressing issue of youth unemployment. It offers a structured framework for large-scale, relevant skill acquisition and development while aligning its objectives with addressing deficiencies in public services and fostering economic growth. N-Power envisions providing a platform where the majority of Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35 can access skill acquisition and development opportunities. The program is meticulously designed to address the challenges of empowerment and, by extension, reduce youth poverty. Notably, it has already yielded positive outcomes, with some Borno state youths wisely utilizing their salaries to invest in projects, initiate small-scale businesses, pay for education, and engage in other constructive activities.

Unemployment stands as one of the paramount developmental issues facing emerging societies like Nigeria (Kayode, 2014). It is especially pervasive among the youth, who constitute a substantial portion of the working-age population and make up more than half of the country's total population. Available data underscores the issue, indicating that over half of Nigeria's population is under the age of 35, with a significant proportion experiencing unemployment and a notable number underemployed (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010; National Population Commission, 2013; Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2016). According to the World Bank's estimates in 2016, the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria hovered around 38 percent.

Despite Nigeria's vast population of approximately 170 million people (NBS, 2013) and its abundant human and natural resources, the nation grapples with numerous challenges. These encompass youth and graduate unemployment, high poverty rates, conflicts, health issues, lack of transparency, overreliance on foreign goods, sluggish economic growth, limited capacity, and skills essential for propelling the economy, along with urbanization. The problem of

unemployment has become a major source of frustration and despondency among Nigerian youths, forcing them to depend on family members and friends for support.

The alarming poverty rate in Nigeria underscores the gravity of the issue. Paradoxically, despite the nation's potential in terms of natural and human resources, a large segment of its population struggles with poverty. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) aptly describe this situation as a "poverty in the midst of plenty." Additionally, Nigeria has featured prominently among the world's most poverty-stricken countries, as indicated in the United Nations' Human Poverty Index Report of 1999 (Na'Allah, 2007). Subsequent reports, such as the UNDP's 2010 findings, revealed that a significant portion of the Nigerian population lived in poverty, pegging the number at 68.7 million in 2004. By the end of 2016, the NBS disclosed that over 112 million Nigerians, constituting 67.1% of the country's population, were living below the UN poverty threshold of \$2 per day (Odey & Sambe, 2019). Notably, a majority of the impoverished populace resides in rural areas, with the northern regions more affected than the south. Moreover, the urban slum dwellers represent the most deprived demographic in the country.

N-Power, a program designed to provide a structure for extensive skill acquisition and development, aims to address inadequacies in public services and invigorate the broader economy. It aspires to create a platform where the majority of Nigerian citizens aged 18 to 35 can access skill development opportunities. N-Power Programme measures are currently operational in all 36 states of Nigeria. According to Omilana's benchmark in 2018, the program intends to engage beneficiaries in various areas of public service, including education (N-Teach), healthcare (N-Health), agriculture (N-Agro), and building/construction (N-Build).

Borno State, situated in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, shares its borders with Yobe to the west, Gombe to the southwest, and Adamawa to the south. Its eastern border forms part of the national border with Cameroon, its northern border is a national border with Niger, and its northeastern border constitutes the entire national border with Chad, making it the only Nigerian state to border three foreign countries. The state derives its name from the historic emirate of Borno, with the emirate's former capital of Maiduguri now serving as the capital city of Borno State. It was established in 1976 when the former North-Eastern State was divided, and it originally included the territory that is now Yobe State, which became a separate state in 1991.

Over the years, the Nigerian government has responded robustly to the escalating poverty levels in the country. Okoro and Bassey (2018) noted that various poverty reduction strategies have been conceived and implemented, all aimed at addressing the ongoing poverty situation. These strategies have been introduced from 1999 to the present and include initiatives such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), SURE-P, and N-SIP. Despite these numerous anti-poverty programs, it is evident that the poverty situation in Nigeria continues to worsen rather than improve (Kayode, Arome & Anyio, 2016).

The concept of "youth" has been defined differently by various authors and international organizations. There is no universally accepted definition of youth, and the notion of youth can vary significantly across scholars, writers, cultures, and societies. For instance, the United Nations (2005) defines youth as individuals aged between 15 and 24. The World Bank (2007) broadens this definition to include young people between the ages of 12 and 24. Torimiro et al. (1999) describe youth as a group of individuals aged 13 to 30. The Nigeria Second National Youth Policy (2009) characterizes youth as both young males and females aged between 18 and 35 who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. While these definitions primarily hinge on age brackets, it's worth noting that being a youth can encompass more than just age. Youth embody characteristics such as potential energies and innovativeness that are universally recognized. These distinguishing features may be absent in childhood or adulthood. As Perez-Morales (1996) highlights, when we discuss and think about youth, we imply a group of young people within a society who possess abundant energy, new ideas, and fresh perspectives for addressing life's challenges.

The high rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria has significantly contributed to elevated poverty levels and insecurity within the country (Ajufo, 2013). More than half of Nigeria's population is under the age of 30, according to the National Population Commission (2013). Awogbenle and Iwuamad (2010) observed from excerpts of statistics obtained from the National Manpower Board and Federal Bureau of Statistics that Nigeria's youth population stands at 80 million, representing 60 percent of the total population. Of these, 64 million are unemployed, and an additional 1.6 million are underemployed. Ossal and Nwalado (2012) point out that the need for empowerment programs began emerging in the mid-1980s due to political instability, inconsistencies in socioeconomic policies, high unemployment rates, mass layoffs, and early retirements resulting from structural adjustment policies and economic downturns. During this period, there was insufficient encouragement from the federal government to promote empowerment activities, leaving individuals and national development grappling with considerable challenges. To address these issues, there is a need to train educated men and women who can effectively function in their society, pursue self-employment, and foster self-reliance,

all of which the N-Power Programme seeks to provide. Based on this premise, the study examines the N-Power Programme as a potent tool for empowering youth in Nigeria.

Nigeria faces numerous challenges that demand the presence of innovative, well-educated, and trainable citizens who possess the spirit and curiosity to think in new ways and the courage to confront and adapt to the challenges ahead. Simultaneously, given the current socioeconomic and political context of the country, a thriving economy necessitates a larger number of young individuals who are willing and able to receive training. These young people should be capable of launching and successfully developing their own commercial or social ventures while also fostering innovation within larger organizations. This statement is supported by a source from the European Scientific Journal in October 2013.

It's a common experience that many graduates from Nigerian universities encounter difficulties in securing employment each year. This challenge is partly attributed to the curricula of universities and other tertiary institutions, which often emphasize training for white-collar jobs (as discussed by Osibanjo in 2006). The socioeconomic conditions in Nigeria pose significant threats and challenges to both the government and the well-being of its citizens. The issue of unemployment is a major concern that requires various strategies and actions for mitigation.

The N-Power Programme has gained widespread acceptance among Nigerian youths. It is acknowledged for its capabilities and effectiveness in stimulating economic growth. Refocusing the N-Power Programme is seen as a vital contribution to nurturing the spirit and culture of empowerment within the country. The program is not only instrumental in shaping the mindsets of young people but also in providing the essential skills and knowledge central to developing an empowerment culture. Addressing Nigeria's multifaceted challenges necessitates the active participation and empowerment of its youth through programs like N-Power, fostering innovation, self-reliance, and economic growth.

The N-Power Programme serves as a valuable platform that provides unemployed youths with motivation, knowledge, and essential skills to embark on successful entrepreneurial ventures (as highlighted by Cho in 2017). The development of mindsets, generic attributes, and skills that form the foundation of N-Power can be effectively instilled from an early stage. For this to occur, it should be integrated into the national system with the seriousness it deserves. Since employment plays a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes, skills, and culture of young people, it is crucial for the N-Power Programme to be addressed from an early stage and sustained over time. This approach will enable young individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for their personal and professional development. Moreover, N-Power should be accessible to all unemployed individuals, irrespective of their academic backgrounds or areas of study, to enhance their competitive advantage. This not only benefits the individual students but also the societies and nations in which they are involved.

The relationship between empowerment and development has been firmly established, and empowerment is now internationally recognized as a key index for measuring development. The significance of empowerment cannot be overstated; it is considered a fundamental human right. Therefore, there is a compelling need to incorporate the N-Power Programme into systems designed to alleviate unemployment. Considering these considerations, this study discussed the following aspects: the conceptual framework, the importance of the N-Power Programme, the need for the program, the rationale for fostering N-Power, its achievements, and the challenges that must be addressed for its effective implementation in Nigeria. Finally, the study provided insights into the way forward, outlining strategies for further development and improvement of the N-Power Programme.

Youth empowerment is a critical aspect of socio-economic development in any society. The N-Power Programme, initiated by the government in Nigeria, is designed to address youth unemployment, alleviate poverty, and enhance the acquisition of skills among beneficiaries. This study seeks to investigate the program's effectiveness in Maiduguri Metropolis, a region marked by specific socio-economic challenges. The N-Power Programme is expected to offer employment opportunities to the youth, which, in turn, should alleviate the high unemployment rate in Maiduguri Metropolis. However, the extent to which this program has effectively generated employment for its beneficiaries remains uncertain. There are concerns that the program may not have provided the anticipated level of employment opportunities to adequately address the pressing issue of youth unemployment in the region. The N-Power Programme is also aimed at reducing poverty among the beneficiaries and their households. Poverty is a pervasive issue in Maiduguri Metropolis, and it is essential to examine whether the program has made a significant impact in reducing poverty levels. There is a need to assess whether the program has effectively improved the socio-economic conditions of its beneficiaries and their families. The N-Power Programme has an inherent focus on equipping youth with relevant skills that can improve their employability and self-reliance. However, it is necessary to investigate whether the program has effectively contributed to skill acquisition among the beneficiaries. There are concerns that the skills

provided may not align with the demands of the local labor market, or that the beneficiaries may not be adequately trained to compete effectively in the job market.

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## 2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is anchored on Elite's theory which was propounded by Mills in 1956. Mills assumes that all political power is held by a relatively small and wealthy groups sharing similar values and interests and coming from relatively similar privileged backgrounds. He argued that institutions were structured in such manner that those at the top of institutional hierarchy, monopolizes power. The theory stressed that the bulk of the population was pictured as passive and inactive mass controlled by the power elite, which subjected the instruments to psychic management and manipulations. Current elite theory defines elite as actors that control resources, occupy key positions, as well as relate through power networks Yamokoski and Dubrow, (2008). The major tenet of elite theory is that major decisions which affect society are considered by elite and these decisions usually reflect the interest of the elite rather than the wishes of the poor masses.

The poverty rate in Nigeria is alarming and worrisome. The theory of structural functionalism is closely associated with the work of Talcott Parsons. The main question that Parsons addresses in his theory refers to processes of how individuals become members of a given society to guarantee the survival and maintenance of the social system (cf Parsons and Bales, 1955). This is because despite the potentials of Nigeria in terms of her natural, human resources and numerical strength, poverty remains endemic and has engulfed a large proportion of its teeming population.

A study conducted by Dauda Abdulwaheed (2019) The study examined the impact of N-Power programmes on youth empowerment in Minna Metropolis, Niger State. A cross sectional survey design was used in this study to generate data. A sample of 225 respondent youths were obtained from 512 total number of N-Power beneficiaries in the metropolis for the study. The study used a structured questionnaire to obtain responses from the study sample. Descriptive statistics such as mean, and percentages were used to measure the demographic data while inferential statistics such as Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyse data in this study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient ( $r$ ) was employed to test the hypotheses. The study focused on graduate unemployed related to N-Power programme. This includes N-Power Agro, N-Power Health and N-Power Teach. The results of the study indicated that there is a no significant relationship between the N-power scheme against the following variables, Employment generation, poverty alleviation and skill acquisition. The study also found that the major factors that are militating against the effectiveness of the N-Power programme includes Job insecurity, non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due, bribery and corruption, poor monitoring. The study therefore recommends that the authorities concerned should expand the horizon of the programme to cover more unemployed graduates, turn the programme to tenure employment opportunities for the beneficiaries and provide grant to enterprising graduates to gainfully employ their latent skills.

Skill acquisition according to Chudi-oji (2013) can be said to mean a well-designed procedure of acquiring new ways and methods of carrying out specialized functions. The policy focus of government in Nigeria since the beginning of the fourth republic has been on how people, especially the youth, can acquire vocational trainings to engage them in gainful activities.

Awogbenle, and Iwuamadi (2010) stated that "the issue of poverty in Nigeria is a paradox, a case of poverty in the midst of plenty". Similarly, Na'Allah (2007) found that the United Nations' Human Poverty Index Report of 1999 positioned Nigeria among the 25 poverty-stricken countries in the world. The UNDP (2010) report on poverty incidence, indicated that the population of Nigerians in poverty is pegged at 68.7 million as at 2004 and in the last quota of 2016, the NBS revealed that not less than 112 million Nigerian representing 67.1% of the entire country's population of 160 then were living below UN poverty level of \$2 per day (Odey & Sambe, 2019). Generally, the available statistics on the incidence of poverty in Nigeria revealed certain characteristics. This includes the fact that a majority of the poor in Nigeria reside in the rural areas; that squalid livelihood is more prevalent in the Northern side of Nigeria than 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. In summary, poverty in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors which includes unstable political history, government corruption and mismanagement, lack of coherent policies formulation, implementation evaluation, over dependent on oil, poor infrastructures, among others. Over the years, government has reacted strongly to the rising poverty trends in the country.

Okoro and Bassey (2018) 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 include the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), SURE-

P, N-SIP. Despite the litanies of programmes on poverty reduction in Nigeria, it has been observed that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is exacerbating rather than ameliorated (Kayode, Arome & Anyio, 2016).

### **2.1. Contribution of N-Power Programme on Employment Generation**

Indeed, most young people are better educated, wealthier, physically healthier and live longer than their elders; but changes in the labor market, family relations and social structures present them with new set of risks and challenges. Here, opportunities for those without skills are fewer, traditional sources of employment are disappearing while people are far less likely to hold a job for life. Yet young people usually face the prospect of periodic successive job change and the need to acquire new skills throughout their working lives to remain employable (Marshall and Butzboch, 2003). Thus, the best defense against social exclusion is a job and the best way to get a job is to have a good education with the right training and experience.

However, the international labor organization (1996) reports that unemployment rates are twice as high among the (15-24) and (25+) age groups than among adults across both developed and developing countries. This research also showed that youth unemployment rates were significantly higher in the 1990s than in the 1980s. Regrettably, early unemployment can permanently impair people's future productive capacity; and the longer an unemployment spell lasts, the more difficult it is to find job or work. Again, unemployment can prevent young people from making the passage from adolescence to adulthood that entails establishing a household (or family). It is also evident that unemployed young people suffer more health problems than those who are employed, including lower rates of general health; more anxiety and depression; high rates of smoking and higher suicide rates. Clearly, young people are at high risk of social exclusion if they fall into a downward spiral of worsening health with unemployment. Yet, in seeking solutions to youth unemployment, we must clearly identify its causes. Perhaps, social exclusion is both a cause and effect of unemployment and this alone may not explain the high and persistent patterns of youth unemployment. In fact, changes in aggregate demand, the growing demand for skilled workers and the rising participation of women who compete with the young for jobs appear to explain in large measure, the continuous rise in youth unemployment (ILO, 2000). And since a strong economy may create employment and not employability, then certain factors are of considerable importance: educational system, processes for enabling youth to make transition from education to employment as well as safety nets for catching those that are vulnerable.

Research conducted by Olorunsola, Joy Omoligho (2022) an evaluation of impact of N-Power Programme among youth in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was also to determine the influence of N-Power Programme on youth productivity and empowerment amongst youth in Nigeria. The research design adopted descriptive research design of the survey type. This is chosen because it permits the use of inductive approach, where sample sizes are used to make generalization about the population. The population consists of all youth in Nigeria and the sample for this study was 400 youths which was selected through multi- sampling procedure. The study made use of a research instrument tagged "Impact of N-Power Programme Amongst Youth questionnaire (INPSAY)". The questionnaire was a self-designed which comprised of two sections; Section A and B. Section A deals with background information or biodata of the respondents while section B consists of 20 items to assess information on Impact of N-Power Programme amongst youth. Face and content validities of the instrument were established by the experts in economics, entrepreneur, tests, measurement, and evaluation both within and outside Ekiti State. Test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument with correlation coefficient of 0.84. The data generated was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the two research questions were answered. The result showed that there is no significant influence of N-Power Programme on empowerment and productivity among youth in Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that N-Power Programme has been viewed in this study as not a sufficient veritable antidote to the endemic problem of unemployment and unproductivity among Nigerian youths. It was therefore recommended that the Economic policies of governments should be geared towards the creation of jobs also that the Federal Government should ensure prompt and timely payment of the stipends to beneficiaries of the programme and create means of assessing loan for them for them to be empowered permanently.

Consequently, training (empowerment) programs are designed to build human capital and foster the acquisition of skills with the expected outcome of improved employment. Yet, these programs can equally facilitate the contact of beneficiaries with the labor market by providing work experience, labor market intermediation, contacts, and references for future employment. In other words, if the program increases participants' human capital, beneficiaries become more employable and more productive once employed (reflecting in higher employment levels and higher labor earnings) ILO (2000).

Indeed, experimental evidence on the impact of youth training (empowerment) programs in developing countries has been increasing during the last decade. However, most of the existing evaluations measure the program's impact in

the short-term (less than two years after beneficiaries finished the program). Notably, youth training programs do not have an impact in terms of employment but in terms of employment quality (possibility of finding a formal job) as well as employment contract and medical insurance with retirement pension; and also, in terms of labor-based income (Ibarraran and Rosas 2009). Comparatively, in the economics literature on the short-term impact of vocational training programs in developed countries; there was great heterogeneity in the observed effects which varies depending on the participants characteristics as well as training type and as regards to vocational training programs for young people; they were noted to have lower impact than Adult-based programs. However, there was less evidence of long-term impact (Schochet *et al*; 2008).

## **2.2. Contributions of N-Power Programme on Poverty Reduction**

The major propeller of this theory is Mills (1956). Mills assumes that all political power is held by a relatively small and wealthy group, sharing similar values and interests and coming from relatively similar privileged backgrounds. This theory argues that institutions were structured in such manner that those at the top of institutional hierarchy monopolizes power, and the bulk of the population was pictured as passive and inactive mass controlled by the powerful elite, which subjected the instruments to psychic management and manipulations. Therefore, the N-Power Programme cannot be devoid from the political decisions of the elite. Evidence shows that the stipend (between N28,000 and N30,000) paid to the beneficiaries on monthly bases for a period of 2 years does not match the World Bank adjusted international poverty line to be \$2.15 per day (Deon et.al,2022). This means that everyone living on less than this amount per day will be considered in extreme poverty. The paradox is that those saddled with the duty of implementation of N-Power Programme are non-poor and holders of political power. There could be no doubt that the ideological basis and reasoning of N-Power Programme is to reinforce the iniquities, inequalities, and plunder inherent in the prevailing socio-economic system that institutionalized the class privilege of a few against a many. This rather has created a bleak future for the younger population in Nigeria. The synergy between monumental elite poverty reduction programs is no other but debilitating evidence of poverty on the faces of masses and increasing systemic upheavals across the country.

Newman Enyioko (2020) The study examined the impact of N-Power Programme on poverty alleviation in Nigeria: A study of Rivers State. Survey design was used in this study to generate data. The study population comprised the youth in all the twenty-three Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A sample of 400 respondents from the Rivers State youths was studied. The study found that the major activities of N-Power Programme towards Poverty alleviation in Rivers State include N-Power Teach, N-Power Creative, N-Power Agro, N-Power Health and N-Power Tech Hardware. The study found that N-Power Programme generate empowerment for the youths in Rivers State. The study revealed that N-Power Programme beneficiaries are mainly university and polytechnic graduates. The study found that the major factors affecting the implementation of N-Power Programme towards poverty alleviation in Rivers State include Insufficient information, non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due, bribery and corruption, wrong bank verification number (BVN), overbearing hands of politicians in the programme, high transportation fare paid by the participants to work, website and internet hiccups, poor funding of the programme. N-Power aspires to provide a platform where most Nigerians can access skills acquisition and development. N-Power is also linked to the Federal Government's policies in the economic, empowerment and social development arenas. From the test of the hypotheses, it is evident that: There is significant relationship between N-Power Programme and poverty alleviation in Rivers State and there is significant relationship between N-Power Programme and empowerment of the youths in Rivers State. The study therefore recommends that: The authorities concerned should promote rural development through N-Power Programme. Integrated rural development is seen as the key for alleviating poverty of the rural dwellers who constitute the greater chunk of the population and that government at all levels should reactivate moribund industries and enterprises and expand the horizon of N-Power Programme in that direction.

## **2.3. Contribution of N-Power Programme on Skill Acquisition of the Beneficiaries**

According to Chigunta (2002), except factors, like unemployment, indiscipline, illiteracy, poverty, and others, are genuinely tackled by the government of nations, the problems confronting the contemporary African youth and the communities where they live will remain unresolved and possibly get worse. To develop and empower youth for community development and participation, the government and other stakeholders (e.g., NGO's and religious bodies) must be involved in the business of youth empowerment by organizing youth programmes that will help to place them (the youth) in a position where they can contribute meaningfully to the development of the society.

The recent of Federal government programa are; National Social Investment Program (NSIP) introduced in 2015 which consist of National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP), Trader Moni, School Feeding Program and N-Power. The N-Power Programme is specifically geared towards empowering youths by training and engaging them in public organisations. Against this backdrop, the study examines the effect of the N-Power scheme on youth empowerment in Anyigba area of

Kogi state, Nigeria. The population of the study was put at 491 which is the total number of N-Power beneficiaries in Anyigba in 2016, from which a sample size of 220 was obtained using Taro Yamane's. Data for the study were sourced primarily via questionnaire and secondarily via web articles, journals, seminar reports, etc. Descriptive and inferential statistics and One-Way ANOVA analysis were used for the data analysis and test of hypothesis. The study found that N-Power scheme has to a very large extent empower the youths in Anyigba in skills acquisition, financial status, self-reliance, and productivity among the youth. The study also gave some recommendations among which is that the government should initiate more youth empowerment programs for development, the government should provide mandatory training and workshops around ICT and agriculture to enhance the beneficiaries' technical skills. Ifatimehin, (2020).

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### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study adopts a survey research design. According to Lere, Daduhun and Bulus (2002) and Ogbonnai, Dakun and Dewan (2006), survey research is to describe, examine and establish the present situation or condition of a selected people or events. More so, this type of design is interested in some characteristics of the population from which intensive study drawn. This is to enable the researcher to get information to draw conclusion on the generalization of the targeted population on the Contribution of N-Power Programme on Youth Empowerment such as employment generation, skill acquisition and poverty reduction in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (M.M.C), Borno State, Nigeria.

#### **3.2. Population and Sample**

The target population of this study comprised all N-power beneficiaries from N-Teach, N-agro, N-tech, and N-Health in Maiduguri which make the total of 23,536 population. Proper sampling methods are important for eliminating bias in the selection process. The sample size was sampled out base on Krejcie and Morgsn's (1970) sampling method to get 379 who benefited from N-power.

#### **3.3. Research Instrument**

A researcher designed questionnaire for data collection was used. The questionnaire consists of two sections, section A& B. Section A consists items relating to demographic characteristics of the respondents, while Section B consist of items related to research questions. The questionnaire was having twenty (20) items for this study. A questionnaire was given to the expert in the field of measurement and evaluation for validation and to supervisors. A four-point Likert scale was developed using a decision rule which consist of the elements; SA- Strongly Agree<sup>4</sup>, A- Agree<sup>3</sup>, D- Disagree<sup>2</sup>, SD- Strongly Disagree<sup>1</sup>. Three hundred and 79 copies of questionnaire were distributed and fully retrieved due to close supervision.

#### **3.4. Procedure for Data Collection**

The researcher obtains a letter of introduction from the office of the Head of Department, Department of Continuing Education and Extension Services, University of Maiduguri, Borno State addressed to Director as well to the respondents. The researcher uses some N-power Staff to assist during administering the questionnaire. Respondents who do not understand any items on the questionnaire was assisted accordingly.

#### **3.5. Method of Data Analysis**

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The results are presented in tables. According to Ogbonna and Dakun (2003); using the descriptive statistics the statistical data was organized in a tabular form to find out the percentages of the responses to the total number of respondents on the parameter of items agree and disagree.



## 4. Results

**Table 1** Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	225	59.4
	Female	154	40.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>
	26-35 years	155	40.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>
Category of the Respondents	N-Teach	152	40.1
	N-Agro	84	22.2
	N-Tech	49	12.9
	N-Health	94	14.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 4.1.1 above provides a detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the respondents in a research study, offering valuable insights into the composition of the study's sample population. This table categorizes respondents based on four key variables: gender, age range, program category within the N-Power initiative, and program batch. Starting with the gender distribution, the table reveals that the sample population is divided into two primary categories: male and female. A total of 225 male respondents are included, constituting 59.4% of the total, while 154 female respondents make up the remaining 40.6%. This gender distribution demonstrates that the study has a higher representation of male respondents. Such a gender imbalance can be essential for researchers to consider when interpreting the data, as it may impact the generalizability of findings and the extent to which they apply to both genders.

The table proceeds to categorize respondents by age range, classifying them into two groups: those aged 18-25 years and those aged 26-35 years. The majority of respondents fall into the 18-25 age group, making up 59.1% of the total, while the 26-35 age group comprises 40.9%. This age distribution provides researchers with insights into the generational composition of the sample. Understanding the age demographics is crucial because different age cohorts may have varying perspectives, experiences, and needs, which could influence the study's findings.

The third variable in the table categorizes respondents based on their participation in different categories of the N-Power Programme, namely N-Teach, N-Agro, N-Tech, and N-Health. Among these categories, N-Teach has the highest representation, with 40.1% of the respondents. N-Agro follows with 22.2%, N-Tech with 12.9%, and N-Health with 14.8%. This categorization is particularly relevant for researchers aiming to investigate the program's effectiveness across different segments. It allows for a more nuanced analysis of how program outcomes and experiences may vary among participants in different program categories.

**Table 2** Contribution of N-Power Programme on Employment Generation of its Beneficiaries

S/N	Items	Frequencies					Total	Mean	Std dev.
		SA	A	D	SD				
2	My participation in the N-Power Programme in Maiduguri impacted my employment opportunities	99 (26.1%)	109 (28.8%)	111 (29.3%)	60 (15.8%)	379 (100%)	2.34	1.03	
3	I would recommend the N-Power Programme to others who are seeking	123 (32.5%)	151 (39.8%)	77 (20.3%)	28 (7.4%)	379 (100%)	2.02	0.90	

	employment opportunities in Maiduguri							
4	I get skills or knowledge acquired through the N-Power Programme have been most helpful in finding employment	58 (15.3%)	170 (44.9%)	87 (23.0%)	64 (16.9%)	379 (100%)	2.41	0.94
5	I received many supports or guidance from the N-Power Programme in Maiduguri in terms of job placement or entrepreneurship opportunities	120 (31.7%)	134 (35.4%)	93 (24.5%)	32 (8.4%)	379 (100%)	2.09	0.94
6	I secure a job or gain self-employment through the skills and training received in the N-Power Programme	116 (30.6%)	154 (40.6%)	85 (22.4%)	24 (6.3%)	379 (100%)	2.04	0.89
7	N-Power Programme has impact on employment generation in Maiduguri	120 (31.7%)	104 (27.4%)	94 (24.8%)	61 (16.1%)	379 (100%)	2.25	1.01
	Total mean						2.32	

Source: Field survey 3023

Table 4.2 above presents a comprehensive analysis of the perceived contribution of the N-Power Programme on employment generation among its beneficiaries in Maiduguri. The first statement, "I am satisfied with the employment opportunities provided by the N-Power Programme in Maiduguri," reveals that 40.6% of respondents strongly agree with this statement, indicating a relatively positive sentiment. Additionally, 25.6% agree, further contributing to a favorable outlook. The mean score for this statement is 2.09, suggesting a moderate level of overall satisfaction among beneficiaries. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 1.10 indicates some variability in responses, implying that not all respondents share the same level of satisfaction.

The second statement, "My participation in the N-Power Programme in Maiduguri impacted my employment opportunities," portrays a positive perception, with 26.1% of respondents strongly agreeing and 28.8% agreeing. This indicates that a significant proportion of respondents believe the program positively influenced their employment prospects. The mean score of 2.34 indicates a relatively strong agreement with this statement, and the standard deviation of 1.03 suggests some diversity in opinions. The third statement, "I would recommend the N-Power Programme to others who are seeking employment opportunities in Maiduguri," reflects a generally positive attitude among beneficiaries. Approximately 32.5% agree, and 39.8% strongly agree with this statement, indicating a strong willingness to endorse the program to others. The mean score of 2.02 suggests overall agreement, and the low standard deviation of 0.90 implies a relatively consistent opinion among respondents.

The fourth statement, "I get skills or knowledge acquired through the N-Power Programme have been most helpful in finding employment," highlights a substantial level of agreement among beneficiaries. A significant 44.9% agree with this statement, emphasizing the importance of the skills acquired through the program in their job search. The mean score of 2.41 indicates a strong agreement, and the standard deviation of 0.94 suggests a reasonably uniform sentiment among respondents. The fifth statement, "I received many support or guidance from the N-Power Programme in Maiduguri in terms of job placement or entrepreneurship opportunities," underscores the support role of the program. About 35.4% agree, and 31.7% strongly agree with this statement, indicating that a considerable portion of respondents found the program supportive in their job or entrepreneurial endeavors. The mean score of 2.09 suggests an overall positive sentiment, and the standard deviation of 0.94 indicates a relatively consistent perception.

The sixth statement, "I secure a job or gain self-employment through the skills and training received in the N-Power Programme," reinforces the idea that the program plays a role in employment generation. Approximately 40.6% of respondents agree, and 30.6% strongly agree with this statement, implying that many beneficiaries attribute their employment or self-employment to the program's training. The mean score of 2.04 indicates an overall positive perception, and the standard deviation of 0.89 suggests a degree of agreement among respondents. The seventh statement, "N-Power Programme has an impact on employment generation in Maiduguri," presents a mixed view among beneficiaries. While 31.7% agree with this statement, 27.4% express agreement, indicating a relatively positive outlook. However, 24.8% disagree, and 16.1% strongly disagree, suggesting a degree of skepticism or uncertainty among some respondents. The mean score of 2.25 suggests a moderately positive perception overall, but the standard deviation of 1.01 signifies some variability in opinions.

## 5. Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, the objective one on table indicates that many beneficiaries perceive the N-Power Programme as having a positive impact on poverty reduction, with high percentages agreeing that it has increased economic opportunities, contributed to income growth, and played a significant role in reducing poverty. However, there is some variation in perceptions, particularly regarding the program's long-term effects and its ability to eliminate poverty. These findings underscore the program's importance in poverty alleviation efforts while highlighting the need for continued assessment and improvement. One of the keyways in which the N-Power Programme contributes to employment generation is through skill development. The program equips beneficiaries with valuable skills and competencies in various fields such as education, agriculture, health, and technology. These skills significantly enhance the employability of participants. The program provides practical training and work experience to its beneficiaries, allowing them to gain hands-on experience in their chosen fields. This real-world exposure is invaluable when seeking employment, as it not only enhances their knowledge but also demonstrates their ability to apply what they've learned. N-Power also actively supports job placement for its beneficiaries. It collaborates with various organizations, including government agencies, to facilitate the recruitment of program participants. These employment opportunities provide beneficiaries with a direct pathway to gainful employment. Youth unemployment is a significant challenge in many emerging societies, and Nigeria is no exception. The N-Power Programme's success in generating employment opportunities for its beneficiaries directly contributes to mitigating this issue. By reducing youth unemployment rates, the program not only benefits individual beneficiaries but also supports broader economic stability and development. Beyond the individual beneficiaries, the positive impact on employment generation also has broader societal and economic implications. Employed individuals contribute to the economy through increased productivity and income generation, which, in turn, can lead to improved living standards and reduced dependence on social support programs. Sustainable development is a key goal for emerging societies. By empowering youth with employment opportunities, the N-Power Programme aids in the development of a sustainable workforce. It not only addresses immediate employment needs but also contributes to the long-term stability and growth of the region. The positive impact on employment generation has policy implications. It suggests that programs like N-Power can serve as effective tools for addressing unemployment challenges. This finding may encourage the continuation and potential expansion of similar initiatives to further boost employment opportunities for youth. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Dauda Abdulwaheed (2019) on the impact of N-Power Programme on youth empowerment in Minna Metropolis, Niger State. A cross sectional survey design was used in this study to generate data. A sample of 225 respondent youths were obtained from 512 total number of N-Power beneficiaries in the metropolis for the study. The study used a structured questionnaire to obtain responses from the study sample. Descriptive statistics such as mean, and percentages were used to measure the demographic data while inferential statistics such as Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyze data in this study. The results of the study indicated that there is a no significant relationship between the N-power scheme against the following variables, Employment generation, poverty alleviation and skill acquisition.

The results also reveal valuable insights into how beneficiaries of the N-Power Programme in Maiduguri perceive its impact on employment opportunities. Overall, the findings indicate a generally positive sentiment among beneficiaries, with many acknowledging the program's role in improving their employment prospects and providing valuable skills. However, there is some variation in responses, highlighting the need for ongoing evaluation and improvement of the program's effectiveness in addressing unemployment challenges in the region. One of the primary ways in which the N-Power Programme reduces poverty is by providing beneficiaries with employment opportunities. This leads to an increase in their income and, consequently, greater financial stability. Beneficiaries earn regular salaries, which can help cover basic needs and expenses, reducing their reliance on external financial support. With an increase in income, beneficiaries can access necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare more easily. This is a crucial step in poverty reduction, as individuals are less likely to experience extreme deprivation when their financial resources are improved. Many beneficiaries of the N-Power Programme may be contributing members of their households. The income they earn through the program can benefit not only themselves but also their families. This additional income can alleviate financial stress within the household and contribute to a better quality of life for all members. The program's impact on poverty reduction is evident in the reduced dependency of beneficiaries on social support programs. As participants gain employment and earn income, they become less reliant on government aid and other forms of assistance, freeing up resources for other critical needs. Poverty reduction goes beyond the financial aspect. It also has psychological implications. The N-Power Programme's impact on financial stability and improved living conditions can boost beneficiaries' self-esteem and overall well-being. Reduced poverty can lead to greater satisfaction and a more positive outlook on life. Poverty reduction at the individual level can contribute to broader economic stability. As beneficiaries have more disposable income, they can contribute to local businesses and the economy, stimulating economic growth and benefiting the entire community. While the N-Power Programme has shown success in moderately reducing poverty, it is essential to consider the sustainability of this impact. Beneficiaries may face challenges in maintaining their improved economic status after their participation in the program ends. Therefore, long-term strategies to support

their financial independence are crucial. The N-Power Programme's moderate reduction of poverty among its beneficiaries signifies a significant step toward improving the economic well-being of young individuals in emerging societies. By providing employment opportunities and financial stability, the program empowers participants to escape the cycle of poverty, contributing to their overall empowerment and the development of their communities. However, it's important to consider the sustainability of this impact and to explore further strategies to support long-term economic well-being. This finding supports a study conducted by Newman Enyioko (2020) on the impact of N-Power Programme on poverty alleviation in Nigeria: A study of Rivers State. Survey design was used in this study to generate data. The study population comprised the youth in all the twenty-three Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A sample of 400 respondents from the Rivers State youths was studied. The study found that N-Power Programme generate empowerment for the youths in Rivers State. The study revealed that N-Power Programme beneficiaries are mainly university and polytechnic graduates. N-Power aspires to provide a platform where most Nigerians can access skills acquisition and development. N-Power is also linked to the Federal Government's policies in the economic, empowerment and social development arenas. From the test of the hypotheses, it is evident that: There is significant relationship between N-Power Programme and poverty alleviation in Rivers State and there is significant relationship between N-Power Programme and empowerment of the youths in Rivers State.

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## 6. Summary

The N-Power Programme have emerged as a vital instrument for fostering youth empowerment within the urban landscape of Maiduguri Metropolis in Borno State, Nigeria. These initiatives have played a transformative role by providing young individuals with access to skill development, employment opportunities, and essential resources, contributing significantly to their overall empowerment. Through various sectors like agriculture, technology, education, and health, the N-Power Programme have effectively reduced and addressed the unemployment challenge that had previously hindered the growth and potential of youth in the region.

In Maiduguri Metropolis, where socio-economic challenges and security concerns have affected the prospects of the youth, the N-Power Programme have emerged as a beacon of hope. By offering training and employment in sectors aligned with both national development goals and individual interests, these programs have contributed to enhancing the employability of young people. The acquisition of relevant skills not only equips them for sustainable livelihoods but also bolsters their self-confidence and sense of purpose, reducing their susceptibility to involvement in negative activities.

Furthermore, the N-Power Programme have acted as a catalyst for local economic growth and community development. As beneficiaries of the program secure gainful employment, they are empowered to contribute to the economy through increased productivity and income generation. This, in turn, has a positive multiplier effect on the surrounding community, fostering a sense of self-reliance and reducing dependency on external aid. By addressing youth empowerment in Maiduguri Metropolis, the N-Power Programme have not only brought tangible improvements to the lives of individual participants but have also contributed to the overall stability and progress of the region.

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## 7. Conclusion

The study on the contribution of the N-Power Programme to youth empowerment in Maiduguri Metropolis has revealed significant insights into the program's impact on employment generation, poverty reduction, and skill acquisition among its beneficiaries. Drawing on established theories and empirical data, several key conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, the N-Power Programme has demonstrated a positive impact on employment generation among its beneficiaries. By providing training, resources, and opportunities, the program has contributed to increased employability and job placement, particularly among the youth in Maiduguri Metropolis. This finding highlights the program's effectiveness in addressing the pressing issue of unemployment in emerging societies like Nigeria.

Secondly, the study has shown that the N-Power Programme has moderately reduced poverty among its beneficiaries. By offering employment opportunities and skills development, the program has empowered young individuals to improve their economic well-being and reduce their dependency on external support. This outcome underscores the program's role in addressing socio-economic inequalities and fostering economic stability within the community.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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