



PRIMARY RESEARCH

Impact of N-power program on poverty alleviation in Nigeria: A study of Gombe State

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of the N-Power program on poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in Gombe State, Nigeria. The federal government of Nigeria designed the N-Power to empower the youth and eradicate the menace of poverty affecting the youthful population in the country. The study used a descriptive survey design, and data were collected from 400 selected beneficiaries of N-Power in Gombe state. A total number of 381 valid responses were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The study discovered that the N-Power program has significantly reduced poverty in Gombe State through improved income and economic self-reliance of beneficiaries. The study also revealed that among the components of the program in Gombe State, N-Teach, N-Agro, and N-Health were the most subscribed components. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between participation in N-Power and youth empowerment in terms of skill acquisition. However, the study also discovered some challenges that hinder the effectiveness of the policy. These include irregular stipend payments, political interference, and inadequate exit strategies. Therefore, the study recommended better monitoring, prompt stipend disbursement, post-exit support, and a more equitable process of selection.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the world's countries that is facing the serious challenges of poverty and unemployment among its youth. This has resulted in a series of problems manifesting in arm robbery, prostitution, political thuggery, kidnapping, and other social vices committed by the unemployed youth in the country. A study by the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that a substantial percentage of Youth in Nigeria remains either unemployed or underemployed, leading to social inequalities and economic dependency (NBS, 2022). In the second quarter of 2024, the unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 declined to 6.5% (NBS, 2025). However, combining informal work, underemployment, and youth who are discouraged and not seeking employment places the youth unemployment rate at over 50% (Kale, 2025). According to Nigerian Economic Summit Group, more than half of Nigeria's youth are either underutilized or trapped in low productivity informal employment (NESG, 2025). To address this problem, the Federal Government of Nigeria initiated the N-Power program

in 2016 with the aim of enhancing skill acquisition, creating temporary employment, and reducing poverty among youth in Nigeria. The program was designed as a way to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment. The program comprises other components, which include N-Power Teach, N-Agro, N-Health, N-Build, N-Creative, N-Tech, and N-Tax. Each is tailored to meet specific labor market needs and improve public service delivery while equipping young Nigerians with relevant skills and income support. Beneficiaries are engaged for 24 months, during which they receive monthly stipends and participate in service-based learning activities.

Despite its nationwide implementation and promising framework, the effectiveness of the N-Power program has been subject to scrutiny, particularly at the sub-national level, where institutional, political, and infrastructural factors may affect program outcomes. In Gombe State, located in the northeast geopolitical zone and characterized by high poverty incidence and a fragile socio-economic landscape, the need to assess the program's impact is particularly com-

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PELLING. While some anecdotal accounts and media reports suggest that beneficiaries have gained valuable skills and income, others cite delays in stipend payments, political manipulation, and post-program uncertainty as major concerns. In specific terms, Abga and Aide (2021), while studying the impact of N-Power in Jigawa State, found that the program effectively contributes to poverty reduction among beneficiaries. In the same vein, Odalonu and Adigu (2023), in their study of N-power in Enugu, also revealed that though the program enhances youth empowerment, there were critical challenges, which include limited job linkage, political interference, and delayed stipends. However, Osimen, Etoroma, Pokubo, and Adi (2025) revealed that the Federal Government of Nigeria had initiated an attempt to reform the N-Power Program with a view to addressing its challenges. A sum of N32.7 was allocated in order to provide sustainable livelihood for unemployed youth in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2025). More so, toolkits and vocational materials were given in an attempt to ensure self-reliance among N-Power beneficiaries (Yeshub, 2025; Fitriana, 2023). However, despite these efforts, it was argued that the long-term impact would depend on sustained implementation and funding (Osimen et al., 2025). Given this backdrop, the present study investigates the extent to which the N-Power program has contributed to poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in Gombe State.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the beneficiaries' participation across various program components,
- To what extent has the N-Power Program impacted on socio-economic outcomes
- What are the challenges faced while implementing the N-Power Program

CONCEPTUALIZING POVERTY AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that transcends the lack of income to encompass deprivation in health, education, and living standards (UNDP, 2020). WB (2022) defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$2.15 per day, a threshold under which a significant portion of Nigeria's population subsists. In regions such as Gombe State, poverty is not only prevalent but exacerbated by systemic underdevelopment and insecurity.

Youth unemployment

Unemployment among youth is a critical factor in perpetuating poverty in Nigeria. According to Nigerian Economic

Summit Group, more than half of Nigeria's youth are either under utilized or trapped in low productivity informal employment (NESG, 2025). NBS (2022), argued that, the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is over 40%, with a large proportion of educated youths unable to secure formal employment. This mismatch between education and employability skills has led to increasing dependence on informal work and social support systems.

Overview of N-Power Program

The N-Power initiative, launched in 2016, is one of four programs under the National Social Investment Program (NSIP). It targets Nigerian youths aged 18–35 years, particularly graduates and non-graduates, aiming to address skill gaps, unemployment, and poverty. The sub-programs include:

N-Power Teach: Deploys graduates to primary and secondary schools to support educational delivery.

N-Power Agro: Engages beneficiaries as agricultural extension workers to boost food production and dissemination of farming practices.

N-Power Health: Trains volunteers to assist in healthcare delivery at primary health centers.

N-Power Build, Creative, Tech (Hardware and Software): Offers vocational and technical training to promote self-employment.

N-Power Tax: Trains youths to support tax administration and awareness.

Beneficiaries receive stipends (₦30,000/month) and digital devices to facilitate work and learning. By 2023, over 500,000 young Nigerians had participated in the program nationwide (NSIP, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have examined the N-Power program as a policy designed to address youth unemployment, reduce poverty, and build capacity. The N-Power program comprises different components which include N-Teach, N-Agro, N-Health, N-Tech, and N-Build, all aimed at skilling youth and enhancing employability. As a government intervention targeting mostly unemployed graduates, its theoretical alignment with empowerment and capacity-building models makes it a rich focus for policy evaluation (Olorunfemi & Egwuma, 2024; Odalonu & Adigu, 2023; Abasi, Rasool, Sami-ur-Rehman, & Tahira, 2023).

Studies have laid emphasis on N-Power's potential in improving youth livelihoods. For example, DANLADI, SUNDAY, and ATSIYA (2023) affirmed that the program significantly increased youth employment in Nasarawa State, while Isah,

Oni, and Goje (2024) observed similar results in Borno, emphasizing the program's potential even in conflict-prone regions. In Lagos State, Komolafe, Dada, Afolabi, and Ajao (2024) discovered that nearly 80% of participants in the N-Agro stream experienced improvement in income and skills. In a similar vein, Nnaeto and Nwambuko (2023) confirmed that the N-Power program fostered entrepreneurial intention among youth, enhancing both income and self-reliance. Meanwhile, some scholars have examined the various challenges facing the N-Power program. Scholars such as Odalonu and Adigu (2023) and Abga and Aide (2021) argued that the N-Power program faced challenges of delayed stipends, political interference, and inadequate job linkage after program exit. Making their contribution, UMEAROUKWU and ILIAS (2022) revealed that faulty Bank Verification Number (BVN) records and corruption are some of the challenges confronted by the N-Power program. While studying the N-Power program in Niger State, Aminu and Aliyu (2024), reported that negative perceptions among beneficiaries due to administrative inefficiencies posed a serious challenge. In a similar vein researcher found out that there were no statistically significant relationship between N-Power participation and long-term job retention in Delta State.

In addition, some studies have focused on the implications of N-Power on broader development indicators. Contributing on this, Nwoba, David, and Egba (2024) revealed, that while the program contributes marginally to socio-economic development, its overall impact on living standards remains inconsistent without long-term support. Chiaha and Ewuim (2024) affirmed that beneficiaries in Lagos gained valuable skills, but many struggled to transition into stable employment. These findings suggest that while N-Power addresses short-term empowerment, it lacks an institutional exit strategy, limiting its transformative potential. Komolafe et al. (2024) and Olorunfemi and Egwuma (2024) thus advocate for integrating N-Power into wider public service structures and enterprise schemes.

Comparative and global evidence also supported the need for structural reform. Chakravarty, Lundberg, Nikolov, and Zenker (2019), in a study on vocational training in Nepal, found that well-designed training program increase income and job stability in rural populations paralleling the intended goals of N-Power. Björkegren, Blumenstock, and Knight (2025) noted that even temporary digital credit interventions improved welfare in Nigeria. Omoju et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of coordination, transparency, and monitoring in youth employment schemes. Their review of national empowerment programs points to

systemic fragmentation and poor accountability as recurring challenges. Okonkwo, Nwokike, and Nwafor (2021) also identify gaps in programme sustainability, noting the disconnect between skill acquisition and labour market absorption. These studies advocate for decentralization, local government involvement, and stakeholder partnerships, particularly with the private sector, to enhance programme relevance and impact.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Human Capital Theory. Schultz (1961) is the proponents of this theory. The argument of this theory is that investments in education, skills, and health improve human productivity and economic value. It further added that knowledge and competencies gained through training and education are also forms of capital, just like physical capital.

This theory is applicable to this study because it sheds light on the fact that N-Power program was initiated in order to provide youth in Nigeria with vocational skills, experience in teaching, healthcare knowledge and others. The skills imparted through N-Power components such as N-Teach, N-Agro, and N-Health enhance beneficiaries' ability to participate more meaningfully in the labor market or entrepreneurial ventures, reflecting a direct application of the theory.

In addition, the stipends given to participants serve as an economic incentive that allows beneficiaries to meet their immediate needs while acquiring long-term productive skills. In this way, the N-Power program contributes to both short-term income support and long-term human capital development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research design to assess the impact of N-Power program on poverty alleviation in Gombe State. The research was conducted across five purposively selected Local Government Areas Gombe, Billiri, Kaltungo, Dukku, and Yamaltu-Deba to ensure a representative spread of urban and rural contexts.

The target population consisted of youths who participated in N-Power program between 2016 and 2023. A sample size of 400 beneficiaries was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. Of these, 381 responses were retrieved and analyzed, representing a response rate of 95.25%.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into sections addressing demographic characteristics, program participation, socio-economic impact, and implementation challenges. Data

analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25, with descriptive statistics employed for basic analysis, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Ethical approval was obtained, and participation was voluntary, with confidentiality assured.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 381 valid responses were analyzed. The demographic distribution is shown in Table 1.

The demographic data in table 1 indicates that, most of N-Power beneficiaries in Gombe State are young, educated males.

TABLE 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 222 | 58.3 |
| | Female | 159 | 41.7 |
| Age Group | 18–25 | 104 | 27.3 |
| | 26–30 | 176 | 46.2 |
| | 31–35 | 101 | 26.5 |
| Marital Status | Single | 218 | 57.2 |
| | Married | 163 | 42.8 |
| Educational Level | Poly-technic | 163 | 42.8 |
| | Graduate University | 190 | 49.9 |
| | Graduate Others | 28 | 7.3 |

Specifically, 58.3% of respondents were male and 41.7% female, with the largest age group being 26–30 years (46.2%), followed by 18–25 years (27.3%) and 31–35 years (26.5%), highlighting the program focus on youth empowerment. A greater proportion of respondents were single (57.2%) compared to married (42.8%), suggesting higher program participation among unmarried individuals. Regarding education, most beneficiaries were university graduates (49.9%), followed closely by polytechnic graduates (42.8%), with only 7.3% falling into other educational categories. This distribution reflects the program's orientation toward addressing youth unemployment among the educated population.

TABLE 2. Participation in N-Power Program

| N-Power Component | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| N-Power Teach | 112 | 29.4 |
| N-Power Agro | 93 | 24.4 |
| N-Power Health | 58 | 15.2 |
| N-Power Build | 35 | 9.2 |
| N-Power Creative | 18 | 4.7 |
| N-Power Tech (Software) | 22 | 5.8 |
| N-Power Tech (Hardware) | 25 | 6.6 |
| N-Power Tax | 18 | 4.7 |

The participation data in table 2 reveals that, respondents were involved in various components of the N-Power Program with the highest engagement in N-Power Teach, accounting for 29.4% of participants. This was followed by N-Power Agro at 24.4%, and N-Power Health at 15.2%, indicating an intense concentration in education, agriculture, and health-related interventions. Other components such as N-Power Build (9.2%), Tech (Hardware) (6.6%), Tech (Software) (5.8%), Creative (4.7%), and Tax (4.7%) had lower participation rates. These figures suggest that the program's implementation in Gombe State focused more on service-oriented sectors like teaching and agriculture, likely due to their relevance to local needs and the participants' educational backgrounds.

in table 3: Respondents were asked to rate the impact of the N-Power program on their socio-economic well-being using a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5). Table 3 presents the mean scores.

TABLE 3. Impact of N-Power Program on Beneficiaries' Socio-Economic Conditions

| Statement | Mean Score | Interpretation |
|---|------------|-----------------|
| The program improved my monthly income. | 4.12 | Agreed |
| I acquired relevant work-related skills. | 4.25 | Strongly Agreed |
| I have become more economically independent. | 3.97 | Agreed |
| My chances of employment have increased post-N-Power. | 3.85 | Agreed |
| I am more engaged in community service as a result. | 3.66 | Agreed |

The findings on the impact of the N-Power program on beneficiaries' socio-economic conditions reveal generally positive outcomes. Respondents agreed that the program significantly improved their monthly income (mean = 4.12) and enhanced their economic independence (mean = 3.97). Notably, they strongly agreed that they acquired relevant work-related skills (mean = 4.25), highlighting the program

effectiveness in skill development. Additionally, respondents agreed that their employment prospects improved after participating in the program (mean = 3.85), and that they became more involved in community service (mean = 3.66). Overall, these results suggest that the N-Power program had a meaningful positive impact on the socio-economic well-being of beneficiaries in Gombe State. Respondents identified several implementation challenges, summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Implementation Challenges

| Challenge | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| Delays in stipend payments | 158 | 41.5 |
| Insufficient orientation/information | 134 | 35.2 |
| Politicization and nepotism in selection | 112 | 29.4 |
| Inaccurate BVN or account verification issues | 95 | 24.9 |
| Inadequate post-program support | 121 | 31.7 |

Respondents highlighted several key challenges affecting the implementation of the N-Power program in Gombe State. The most commonly reported issue was delays in stipend payments, cited by 41.5% of participants, which likely undermined beneficiaries' financial stability and morale. Insufficient orientation and information was also a significant concern (35.2%), suggesting gaps in communication and program awareness. Additionally, politicization and nepotism in the selection process were reported by 29.4%, indicating perceptions of unfairness or bias in beneficiary recruitment. 24.9% of the respondents were affected by inaccurate BVN or account verification pointing to administrative inefficiencies while 31.7% noted that inadequate post-program support served as a serious challenge. This shows that there need for post-exit program

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study on the impact of N-Power program on poverty alleviation and youth empowerment revealed the following: That the N-Power program had significantly reduced poverty in the study area. A significant number of the beneficiaries believed that, the N-Power has improved their ability to meet basic needs, and significantly increased their income. This finding is in agreement with that of Olorunfemi and Egwuma (2024), who found that N-Power program helped in poverty reduction among young adults in southern Nigeria. In a similar vein, Abga and Aide (2021) also revealed that, beneficiaries of N-Power in Benue State were transform from unemployed to now self-sufficient as a re-

sult of their participation in the program.

The study also discovered that the N-Power program has significantly improved youth empowerment through training and practical work experience. Respondents admitted that they had gained lifetime skills via the program. These findings were supported by Okonkwo et al. (2021), who discovered that N-Power program promote youth resilience in an unpredictable job market. More so, DANLADI et al. (2023) also confirmed that N-Power graduates in Nasarawa State were better equipped

However, the study revealed that N-Power program faced some challenges that limit its effectiveness in poverty eradication in the study area. These include: political interference, irregular payment of stipends, and corruption. Many beneficiaries revealed that delays in payment of stipend as well as issues related to Bank Verification Numbers (BVN) were some of the challenges faced. These findings were also supported by UMEAROUKWU and ILIAS (2022), who discovered that governance gap and institutional weaknesses hampers the impact of social investment programmes in Nigeria. In addition, influence from politicians in terms of selection of beneficiary undermines transparency and fairness (Odalonu & Adigu, 2023; Jam, Khan, Zaidi, & Muzaffar, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of the N-Power program on poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in Gombe State, Nigeria. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative and data analysis revealed that, N-Power program had significantly improved income levels and reduced poverty in Gombe State, Nigeria. Similarly, the program has enhanced youth empowerment, equipping beneficiaries with relevant skills and experiences. However, challenges of delayed stipend disbursement, political interference, and poor exit mechanisms affected the program.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- Timely disbursement of stipends by the Federal Government of Nigeria
- That there should be transparent recruitment and selection process
- Government should ensure improved information and sensitization
- Federal Government of Nigeria should strengthening post-exit strategies
- Government should expand the N-Power Program to Rural Areas

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