

N-POWER PROGRAMMES AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA: ENUGU STATE EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The National Bureau of Statistics 2016 reported that about 67 percent of Nigerian population was living below the international poverty line on less than US\$1.90 a day. This ugly development necessitated the Federal Government of Nigeria, in the year 2016, to come up with several social intervention policies and programmes. Prominent among these programmes are the N-power programmes, the Conditional Cash Transfer, Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme and Home Grown School Feeding Programme. The objective of this study is to assess the implementation of N-Power programmes in Enugu State from 2016 to 2020. The study adopted survey research design. The study was anchored on the Elite theory. Findings include that N-Power programmes were poorly implemented in Enugu State. Furthermore, that N-Power programmes have no significant impact on the reduction of poverty among the youths in Enugu State. The study recommended among others that federal government should review the structure and strategies of N-power programmes in Nigeria, to make it more implementable and inclusive.

Keywords: Poverty, Elite theory, N-Power Programmes, Enugu State, Social Intervention.

JEL Classification Codes: D73, H53, I38

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is blessed with abundance of human and mineral resources. Despite the abundance of its natural resources, Nigeria still remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently released the 2019 Poverty and inequality report in Nigeria, which highlights that 40 percent of the total population, or almost 83 million Nigerians, live below the country's poverty line. Nigeria's poverty profile is grim and embarrassing for a country endowed with humongous human and natural resources. Evidence has shown the level of abject poverty in Nigeria following the collapse of crude-oil prices between 2014 and 2016. In the wake of 2016, the economy was thrown into its first recession, as the economy shrank by 1.6%. Hence, poverty stands at 33.1% in Africa's largest economy. In 2018, the rate of population growth was higher than economic growth rate which culminated into a slow rise in poverty. Likewise, World Bank (2018) reported that almost half of the Nigerian population lives below the global poverty line of \$1.90 per day with attending unemployment rate at 23.1%.

Poverty has become a menace militating against the social and economic development of Nigeria. Many children are out of school because their parents could hardly feed them, let alone paying their tuition even in the claimed free education scheme. There are more jobless graduates than ever, and many of them have gone into the dreaded field of robbery, kidnapping and money rituals. Infact, the situation was as bad as that when Akhira and Obadeyi (2015) analyzed the nation's poverty rate and concluded that about 70

percent of Nigerians live below poverty line. Nigeria was ranked the 152nd out of 188 countries in terms of the living standards.

Poverty reduction has been the concern of government all over the world. Successive Nigerian governments have established one form of poverty reduction programmes or the other, all in an effort to fight poverty in Nigeria. General Olusegun Obasanjo was the first Nigerian President that established poverty reduction programme which he called Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in the year 1978. President Shehu Shagari, during his own tenure established Green Revolution in the year 1982. Ever since then other successive Presidents of Nigeria have come up with different programmes which was targeted towards curbing the menace of poverty. Most recent among the poverty reduction efforts is the National Social Investment Programme (N-SIP) consisting of N-Power Programme, Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) and Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSP). These programmes were established in the year 2016 by President Muhammadu Buhari administration, and they were targeted towards reducing poverty in Nigeria.

The increasing incidence of poverty in spite of various resources and scheme on poverty-related programmes in Nigeria suggest that the programmes and schemes were ineffective and ineffectual. In the light of the present government's deep concern for the widespread of poverty in Nigeria, the study assesses the implementation of N-Power programmes as poverty reduction strategy in Nigeria.

Against these backdrops, the questions therefore are:-

- i. How can the implementation of N-Power programmes be rated?
- ii. Is there a relationship between N-Power programmes and poverty reduction in Enugu State?

The broad objective of the study is to review the N-Power programmes and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Specifically the study will determine the extent of implementation of N-Power programme in Enugu State and determine the impact of n-power programmes on the reduction of poverty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing Poverty

Poverty exists when a person lacks the means to satisfy his/her basic needs (Ogunjimni, 2022). Narayan and Petesch (2002:10) cited in Ali (2016) observed that "poverty also may look quite different, seen through the eyes of a poor man or woman". Poverty is multidimensional in nature. According to Usman (n.d), poverty is commonly defined as a situation of low-income or low consumption. It can also be seen as a situation in which individuals are unable to meet the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, education, security and health. Ajakaiye and Adeyeye (2001) conceptualized poverty as a function of education, health, child mortality and other demographic variables. Aderonmu (2010) defined poverty as lack of command over basic variables. The summary of this definition is that poverty can be seen as a situation in which an individual is unable to provide himself and his family the basic necessities of life, due to economic, social, political and psychological incapacitation.

2.1.2 N-Power Programmes

N-Power Programmes are connected to the Federal Government Policies on economic, employment and social development area in Nigeria. N-power programmes are programmes established by the administration of President Muhamadu Buhari's Federal Government of Nigeria. This programme is meant to address the challenges of youth unemployment. The programme was established in the year 2016. This programme, provides a structure for large scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development. The Federal Government intends to use the outcome of this programme to address the inadequacy in the public services and also to stimulate the larger economy. According to the n-power website, [n-power](#) aspires to provide a platform where most Nigerian citizens between the ages of 18-35 can access skills acquisition and development.

N-Power Programmes are currently in operation in the 36 states of Nigeria. The benchmark according to Omilana (2018) is to engage the beneficiaries on different areas of public service, including education (N-Teach), health (N-Health), agriculture (N-Agro), building/construction (N-Build).

Beneficiaries of this programme are paid a monthly stipend of N30, 000 during their period of engagement. The N-Power Programmes according to the website invoice.ng are broadly categorized into two viz N-Power Graduate categories and N-power Non-graduate categories.

N- Power Graduate Categories - The N-Power Graduate category also known as N-power volunteer corps is the post tertiary engagement initiative for Nigerians between the ages 18 and 35. It is a paid volunteering programme of 2 years duration. The graduates will undertake their primary tasks in identified public services within their communities. N-Power volunteers will provide teaching instructional and advisory solutions in four key areas which include N-power Agro, N-Power Health, N-Power Teach and N-Power Tax

N-Power Non-Graduate Categories - This category is designed to train and empower non-graduate with skills that they can use for the betterment of themselves and the economy at large. This programme offer training and issue certificate to all successful candidates. N- Power non-graduate category is designed to provide training and certification in two key areas which include N-Power Knowledge and N-Power Build.

As indicated by Omotola (2008), Nigeria is lavishly supplied and the nation's riches possibilities show in the types of common, geological and socio economic variables. With this condition, Nigeria ought to rank among the wealthiest nations of the world that should have no business with poverty. Even at that, Okpe and Abu (2009) remarked that Nigeria has witnessed a stupendous increment in the level of poverty.

Taiwo and Agwu (2016:20) have identified the causes of poverty to include inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate physical assets, inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor region, low endowment of human capital among others. Poverty can have devastating effects on the people that are affected. It can lead to physical and psychological misery as a result of inadequate nourishment and lack of medical care among others. Poverty can equally have grave consequences on the economic, political and social development of a nation.

2.2 Theoretical Literature

2.2.1 Elite Theory and 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 programmes 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 programmes are non-poor and holders of political power. There could be no doubt that the ideological basis and reasoning of N-power programmes 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 evidences of poverty on the faces of masses and increasing systemic upheavals across the country.

2.2.2 Empowerment Theory and Poverty Reduction

Empowerment refers to the ability to make choices (Kabeer, 2003). Empowerment related theories are of two transitions. The first are those who see empowerment as something related to founding and growing a business enterprise (Schumpeterian entrepreneur) (Azam, 2016 in Enyioko, 2020). The second are those who see an opportunity and gather all the resources required to pursue it (Kirznerian entrepreneurs). Based on the above categories, two broad schools of empowerment thoughts emerged. The Empowerment traits school and the Management Skills School. The empowerment traits school believes that entrepreneurs are

'born' and not 'made' and that it is not possible to teach empowerment (Azaam, 2016). The Management Skills School on the other hand argues that empowerment can be trained and developed, and that technique of empowerment is a discipline that can be taught or learnt. Hence entrepreneurs are made and not born. It is strongly believed that refocusing N-Power programmes will immensely contribute in developing the spirit and culture of empowerment among the teeming poor Nigerian youth. N-Power programmes is essential not only to shape the mindsets of the unemployed young people but also to provide the skills and knowledge that are central to developing an empowerment culture. N-Power programmes if effectively implemented will provides unemployed youth the motivation, knowledge, and skills essential for launching a successful venture company. The segments of the programme will develop the skills and capacities along the skills set in the value chain of website development, mobile apps maintenance and start the talent development effort for the growth of information technology industry in Nigeria (Kehinde, 2021). This empowerment scheme if well embraced by the target beneficiaries will provides an opportunity to achieve prosperity and poverty will be a forgotten issue.

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2.3 Empirical Literature

The issue of poverty reduction strategies and its implementation in Nigeria has occupied the studies of well-meaning researchers in recent times. Some of these studies are reviewed thus: Enyioko (2020), conducted a study on 'The impact of N-Power programmes on poverty alleviation in Rivers State, Nigeria'. The study found that N-Power programmes generate empowerment for the youths in Rivers State. It also noted that the beneficiaries of N-Power programmes are mainly university and polytechnic graduates. The study found that major factors affecting implementation of N-Power programmes towards alleviating poverty in Rivers State include: insufficient information, non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due, bribery and corruption, wrong bank verification number, overbearing hands of politicians in the programme, high transportation fare paid by participants to work, website and internet hiccups, poor funding of the programme.

Furthermore, Ogunmodede et al (2020) carried out research on 'Unlocking the potential of Agribusinesses in Africa through Youth Participation: An Impact Evaluation of N-Power Agro Empowerment Programme in Nigeria'. The researchers revealed that the impact of N-Power Agro programme for Nigeria's young men and women on employment and income generation for participants was shown to be effective and positive, hence an increase in the beneficiaries income was recorded.

Again, Isa and Auwal (2019) carried out research on 'Public Policy and Empowerment programmes in Nigeria: Assessment of N-Power in Taraba State'. The paper found that N-Power programme is a temporary Social Investment Programme. The paper noted some major challenges of the programme among which were the concentration of the programme on the educated youths instead of all citizens. Similarly, Amah (2019) and Clarida (2019) in their studies observed that policy have succeeded in keeping yields at low level. Writing on the implementation of n-power programmes in Nigeria, Ikande (n.d) have stated that some of these youth empowerment programmes are facing a lot of criticisms. He pointed out that such schemes are not implemented ubiquitously but only in selected regions. He also complained that it is not completely clear how the participants are chosen. It is believed that all national programmes should be implemented everywhere.

Similarly, Obagoblog (2017), wrote on the implementation of N-Power scheme in Nigeria, and observed that the registration and verification exercises involved are too stressful and seemed not to be well organized. He also complained that the n-power official website is often not available for applicants. Obagoblog also pointed out that after the n-power test; only few who are lucky are deployed to n-power

programmes like n-power health, n-power agro, and n-power tech where skills can be acquired. While other unlucky applicants are deployed as teachers. He also pointed out the issue of deployment, where beneficiaries are deployed to places far away from their location, despite the fact that they filled their location properly during registration.

Speaking in an interview with the Sunday Guardian Magazine 16th April 2017, Ebiri (2017) identified some system set back as factors threatening to wreck the n-power programmes in Nigeria. Such factors include insufficient information and wrong Bank Verification Number. This problem has made it difficult for some of the beneficiaries of n-power to get their monthly stipend of ₦30, 000. Ani (2019) also identified some of the challenges of n-power programmes to include lack of fund, delayed attention to mails by Abuja, communication gap between Abuja and State, porosity in the programme because of communication gap and partial consistency.

In their evaluation of n-power teacher's competence and resource utilization, Okoro and Bassey (2018:12), remarked that there is urgent need to revisit n-power teacher scheme in the light of a renewed vision of education for all (EFA) and social development. The selection of n-power teachers was not based on teacher's education qualification. It is pathetic that the staff teachers have saddled the whole classroom responsibilities to the empowered youth without adequate training.

This study has reviewed different literatures and studies that are related to poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. However, from all the multiple studies so far reviewed, it was observed that insufficient studies have been carried out to investigate the impact that N-Power programme has on poverty reduction in Enugu State. It is based on this identified gap that this study is out to fill.

2.3.2 Poverty Situation in Nigeria

Poverty started to deepen in Nigeria at the time of the 1970's oil-price boom that propelled in into the rank of Africa's wealthiest country. As the elite grew richer through patronage networks in the petroleum industry, successive military and civilian governments neglected agriculture, manufacturing and education. Despite being the largest oil producer in Africa, Nigeria has struggled to translate its resource wealth into rising living standard. A slump in oil prices and sharp fall in oil production saw the country's economy slide into recession in 2016. A recent rise in oil prices has helped to spur the country's economic recovery. Addressing the situation, Adebayo (2018), reported in CNN, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) report that even though growth was again beginning to rise, that more needs to be done to reduce unemployment and address poverty. Adebayo reported that Nigeria has overtaking India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty with an estimated 87 million Nigerians or around half of the country's population, thought to be living on less than \$1.90 a day.

Narrating the poverty situation in Nigeria, the World Poverty Clock (2018) has noted that extreme poverty in the country is increasing by nearly six people every minute. Explaining their predicament, Onu et al (2019) narrated the plight of Abdul Edosa, a high school dropout who narrated his ordeal "I eat anything I see and I sleep under the bridge in Ikeja. I beg money from peopleanything they give me I eat". Fatima Ali 23, mother of two children finds herself stuck in a partly demolished slum outside the Aboki Estate in Lagos making \$1.40 a day, selling roasted peanuts in front of corrugated-iron shack she calls home. Alkassim Ibrahim is 45years, homeless and amputated after a road accident, and today, his only possessions are his clutches, and a thin blanket and a bag of clothes he uses as a pillow. This is to mention but a few.

Nigeria has a long history of mismanagement, corruption and disregard for due process and that has contributed to the high number of people living in poverty. Poverty rates are higher in Northern States than they are in parts of the South (Mwai and Goodman 2019). About 80 percent of people who earn an income are active in the informal sector or have what the UN calls "vulnerable employment", ie work that lacks social security or guarantees any kind of rights.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Elite Theory

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.

Many analysts have offered a number of explanatory factors for poor implementation and poor performance of n-power programmes and others related poverty eradication programmes in Nigeria. These explanations are not necessarily wrong because they can have serious consequences for policy implementation in any country. However, they are inadequate for understanding the ineffective implementation of policy programmes as evidenced in most youth development programmes in Nigeria such as n-power programmes. They are inadequate because they fail to address what is fundamental.

The study posits that N-Power programme is not merely a consequence of an implementation gap. It is rather traceable to the nature of Nigerian state whereby the powerful ruling elite use their absolute and arbitrary powers to control, manage and manipulate government polices to their selfish interest. N-Power Programmes have some inherent bad structures that will not allow the implementation to function properly. Government is aware of the bad structures but are not being realistic thereby implementing the programmes. They know they will not achieve the goals of the programme. N-Power Programme is being oriented, controlled and directed by the ruling elite class who does not have the interest of the poor masses in mind.

Most beneficiaries of these programmes will likely be the relatives and friends or those with political affiliation with the elite who control these programmes. Therefore, N-Power Programme can be seen as an instrument in the hands of a privileged class who perpetually dominate, exploit and subjugate the majority of the citizenry.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Study Area

The scope of the study covers Enugu State of Nigeria. Enugu State is one of the 36 States of Nigeria. It is an inland State in southeastern Nigeria. Its capita is Enugu from where the State derives its name. Enugu State was created on 27th August 1991 from the Eastern two-thirds of Anambra State. The Igbo constitute the majority of the State's population. Agriculture plays an important role in the state's economy. Yam, palm-oil products, maize, rice and cassava are the main crops. Enugu State is made up of three senatorial zones. The state has a total of 17 Local Government Areas. The population of Enugu State according to the NBS (2016) is about 4,411,100. According to the NPC (2013), half of this population in Enugu State is made up of youths.

4.2 Research Design

The survey research design was used in the study. Data for the study were generated both from primary and secondary sources such as personal interviews and direct observations. The survey design allowed the researches to collect and analyze data from some of the beneficiaries as well as official of N-Power programmes. The secondary data relied on materials such as gazettes, policy frameworks, publications, seminar/ workshop papers as well as internet materials on the subject area. Data were collected and analyzed using frequency and simple percentages.

In this study, considering the nature of this topic, the population of the study was drawn from the beneficiaries of n-power programmes and also the N-Power officials in Enugu State.

The population of this study is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Population of the Study

S/No	N-Power Programmes/Officials	No of Beneficiaries
1	N-Health	1866
2	N-Agro	4192
3	N-Teach	10,098
4	N-Tax	33
5	N-Build	258
6	N-Tec h (Hardware)	95
7	N-Power Officials	4
	Total	16546

Source: Enugu State Economic Planning Commission. Report and Presentation on N-Power achievements held on 14th January 2019

4.3 Sample Size

In determining the sample size, the study made use of Yamane’s (1985:250) proportional sampling technique. Consequently, 258 out of 16546 respondents were selected from the beneficiaries and officials of N-Power programmes in Enugu State. Purposive sampling techniques were used to generate data for this study. Purposive sampling technique was used because of the unique nature of the sizes of beneficiaries in different programmes and officials of N-Power that constitute the population of the study. The researchers interviewed the four officials of N-Power programmes in Enugu State because they are small in number and we want to get specific information from each of them. Information obtained from these key officials helped to beef-up the findings of the study. The sample size is shown in the table below:

Table 2: Sample size distribution of interviewees per programme

S/No	N-Power Programmes/Officials	No of Beneficiaries	No of Interviewees
1	N-Health	1866	50
2	N-Agro	4192	50
3	N-Teach	10,098	54
4	N-Tax	33	20
5	N-Build	258	40
6	N-Tec h (Hardware)	95	40
7	N-Power Officials	4	4
	Total	16546	258

Source: Researchers’ compilation, 2019

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Implementation of N-Power in Enugu State

Table 3: Perception of Interviewees (beneficiaries) on the implementation of N-Power Programmes in Enugu State

S/N	Interview Question	Category of Responses	Frequency	Percent age
1	How would you appraise the implementation of n-power programme in Enugu State?	Well implemented	30	12%
		Fairly will implemented	56	22%
		Poorly implemented	168	66%
		Total	254	100%
2	Did you influence your selection?	I did	18	7%
		I did not	236	93%
		Total	254	100%

3	How did you react to your posting?	I was happy when I saw my posting I was not happy when I saw my posting because I was posted wrongly I reacted with mixed feelings	42 132 80	17% 52% 31%
		Total	254	100%
4	What did you do when you discovered that you were wrongly posted	I reported to n-power officials through the official website I complained to the unit head of where I was posted I stop going to work/training centre because I cannot pay the transportation bills. I do not have such problem	146 54 12 42	57% 21% 5% 19%
		Total	254	100%
5	Were you later reposted	I was reposted to a trekable distance I was reposted to another far distance I was not re-posted I was advised to quit the programme if I was not comfortable with the posting	0 10 230 14	0% 4% 90% 6%
		Total	254	100%
6	Who supervises your work/training?	N-Power State Officials Head of unit where I was posted Nobody is particular	54 14 186	21% 6% 73%
		Total	254	100%
7	How regular is the supervision?	Very regular Not regular No supervision	60 182 12	13% 72% 5%
		Total	254	100%
8	How regular is the payment of allowance?	Very regular Not regular Have not received any allowance	146 82 26	58% 32% 10%
		Total	254	100%
9	How did you handle cases such as denial or irregular payment?	I reported to N-power office at Enugu State I reported to the unit where I was posted I stopped going to work/training I do not have such problem	60 26 22 146	24% 10% 8% 58%
		Total	254	100%
10	Did this report solve your problem?	My problems were resolved immediately My problems were resolved much later My problem are yet to be resolved I do not have such problem	0 0 108 146	0% 0% 42% 58%
		Total	254	100%

11	Who pay your allowance?	Federal government of Nigeria Enugu State Government I don't know, I have not been paid	228 0 26	90% 0% 10%
		Total	254	100%
12	Enugu State is made up of three senatorial geopolitical zones indicate where you below?	Enugu-East Enugu –South Enugu –North	70 56 128	28% 22% 50%
		Total	254	100%
13	What advice will you give government to help in better implementation the programme	i. Post beneficiaries to trekable distance ii. Convert N-power jobs to permanent jobs iii. Pay arrears of allowance owned to beneficiaries iv. Establish N-Tech (Hardware office in Enugu State) v Government should empower N-power skill acquisition to help them establish on their own		

Source: Field Survey, January 2019

The data on Table 3 above revealed that 66% of the beneficiaries of n-power programmes believed that the programmes were poorly implemented in Enugu State. 93% accepted that they did not in any way influence their selection. Some of the criteria through which the implementation level was measured were as follows: 52% of the beneficiaries were not happy with their posting and they believed they were wrongly posted. However, 78% of the beneficiaries reported/complained their wrong postings to both the N-power state coordinators and the unit heads of where they were posted, and also to N-Power website. 90% reported that they were not reposted whereas the remaining 10% revealed that they were re-posted to another far distance. 73% beneficiaries accepted that nobody in particular supervises their work/training, and 72% believed that the supervision was not regular. 58% beneficiaries accepted that payment of their allowances was very regular whereas the remaining 42% were either not paid or received irregular allowances. In all the reported cases of irregular/non-payment of allowances, none of these problems was resolved. 50% of the beneficiaries that was interviewed are indigenes of Enugu North senatorial zone.

Table 4: Perception of interviewees (officials) of N-Power programmes on the implementation of n-power programmes in Enugu State.

S/N	Interview Question	Category of Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	How would you appraise the implementation of n-power programs in Enugu State?	Well implemented Fairly well implemented Poorly implemented	0 1 3	0% 25% 75%
		Total	4	100%
2	How did you influence the selection of beneficiaries of n-power	I did not influence selection I have a political god father	4 0	100% 0%
		Total	4	100%

3	How did you react to the list of beneficiaries posted to you?	I received it with joy and started implementing I wasn't happy although I did my job I reacted with mixed feelings	0 4 0	0% 100% 0%
		Total	4	100%
4	Giver reasons for your answer to question 3 above?	(i)No logistics was attached to all the activities involved eg no vehicle, no supervision allowance (ii)No provision was made for us to solve problems (iii)No allowance was given to us to benefit from the programmes	3 - 1 0	75% - 25% 0
		Total	4	100%
5	Who does the supervision of the beneficiaries	I do the supervision myself I delegate the unit heads of where they were posted to supervise them. Federal government supervises them	1 3 0	25% 75% 0
		Total	4	100%
6	How regular do you supervise them?	Very regular Not regular I don't supervise	0 4 0	0% 100% 0
		Total	4	100%
7	How did you handle cases of denial of irregular payment?	I reported their cases to state coordinator of n-power I try to persuade them to report their complaints through the website and then to be patient Sometimes I try to sanction them if they become stubborn	1 2 1	25% 50% 25%
		Total	4	100%
8	Do these reports persuasion and sanctions solve the problems?	It does It does not It does to an extent	0 4 0	0% 100% 0%
		Total	4	100%
9	From your observations, was the selection of beneficiaries distributed according to three geo-political zones in Enugu State?	It was done according to n-power programmes It was done according to the local governments It was done according to three geo-political zones in Enugu State	4 0 0	100% 0% 0%
		Total	4	100%

Source: Field Survey, January 2019.

The data presented on Table 4 above shows the perception of officials of n-power programmes on the implementation of the programmes in Enugu state. The data revealed that 75% of the officials of N-Power programmes believed that the programmes were poorly implemented in Enugu state. The criteria in which the implementation level was measured were as follows: 100% of the officials of n-power programmes were not happy when they received the list of beneficiaries posted to them, and this affected their attitudes towards the implementation of the programmes. 75% of the officials accepted that no logistics was attached to all the activities involved in the implementation exercise. 75% of the official indicated that they delegated the supervisory function to the unit heads of where the beneficiaries were posted, while 100% of the officials of N-Power programmes accepted that their supervision was not regular. All the officials believed that they were not in any position able to solve numerous problems arising from implementation of the programmes such as irregular or denial of payments. In addition, the officials of n-power programmes accepted that the selection of N-Power beneficiaries in Enugu State was distributed according to the programmes involved, and not according to geo-political zones.

5.2: The Relationship between N-Power programmes and Poverty Reduction in Enugu State

Table 5: Perception of Beneficiaries on the Relationship between N-Power Programmes and Poverty Reduction in Enugu State.

S/N	Interview Question	Category of Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	How long have you been benefiting from n-power programme?	About two years	228	90%
		About one year	0	0%
		Have not benefitted	26	10%
		Total	254	100%
2	Have you started receiving allowance?	I have started receiving	206	82%
		I have not started receiving	26	10%
		I don't have any hope of receiving allowance	22	8%
		Total	254	100%
3	How often were you paid?	Regularly	132	52%
		Irregular	96	38%
		I have not been paid	26	10%
		Total	254	100%
4	Has n-power programme solved your unemployment problem?	N-Power Programme has solved my unemployment problem	11	4%
		N-Power Programme has not solved my unemployment problem	10	4%
		N-Power Programme has partially solved my unemployment problem?	233	92%
		Total	254	100%
5	Can you now pick your hospital bills without begging for help?	I can pick my hospital bills without begging for help	18	7%
		I cannot pick my hospital bills with the allowance I receive	82	32%
		I can only afford to buy petty drugs from medicine store with my N-power allowance	154	61%
		Total	254	100%

6	With the allowance and empowerment from n-power, can you now comfortably provide yourself with basic necessities of life?	I can I cannot I have not been empowered I can practically provide some basic needs but not without comfort	0 214 40	0% 84% 16%
		Total	254	100%
7	Can you now solve one or two problems on your own without begging for help?	I can I cannot It depends on the problem and how much I have to spend mostly	0 218 36	0% 86% 14%
		Total	254	100%
8	N-Power Programme have now made you buoyant	I am now buoyant I am not buoyant I am still poor	0 189 65	0% 74% 26%
		Total	254	100%
9	Does your involvement in n-power programme reduce your poverty level significantly	N-Power Programme has reduced my poverty level N-Power Programme has not reduced my poverty level N-Power programme has increased my power poverty level	53 105 96	21% 41% 38%
		Total	254	100%

Source: Field Survey, January 2019.

The data on Table 5 above shows the perception of some beneficiaries on some level of relationship between N-Power programmes and poverty reduction in Enugu state. 90% of beneficiaries accepted that they have been in the programmes for about 2 years. 79% beneficiaries revealed that their involvement in N-Power programmes have not reduced their poverty level significantly. 93% beneficiaries revealed that they cannot pick their hospital bills with N-Power programme allowance. 84% beneficiaries revealed that they have not been empowered and therefore cannot provide themselves with basic necessities of life. 86% beneficiaries believed that they cannot solve one or two problems on their own without begging for help. 74% beneficiaries believed that they cannot group themselves as being buoyant because they are involved in N-Power programmes.

5.2 Findings and Discussion

The study examined N-Power programmes and poverty reduction in Nigeria, with a focus in Enugu State. The findings from the study emanating from objective one showed that N-Power programmes in Enugu state were poorly implemented. From the interview conducted, one could easily find out that greater percentage of both the officials and beneficiaries of N-Power programmes reported that the programmes were poorly implemented. A lot of lapses were identified and these lapses impede the implementation of the programme. Some of these lapses include.

(a) Lack of quality and adequate infrastructure

One major problem observed in the implementation of n-power programmes in Enugu State is related to posting of beneficiaries. Most beneficiaries were posted to places far away from their residents. All efforts that were made to get them reposted to trek able distance fell on deaf ears. The implication is that some of them have to spend money to re-locate, while others who could not cope abandoned the programme. A case in point is the N-Hardware programme. This group of beneficiaries undergoes training on computer hardware applications. There is no centre in Enugu State where the beneficiaries of Enugu State indigenes are trained on N-Hardware programme. All the beneficiaries of this programme in Enugu state were posted to Owerri in Imo State for the training where the N-Hardware equipment was cited. This is a clear indication

of lack of adequate infrastructure to the proximity of the selected beneficiaries. The finding conforms to Obagoblog (2017) which indicates that beneficiaries are deployed to places far away from their locations. National programmes should be implemented everywhere. The fact here is that Federal Government has exposed itself by letting us know that Enugu State does not have quality and adequate infrastructure to train n-power beneficiaries.

(b) Lack of commitments by the operators and beneficiaries of the programmes.

There is total lack of commitment by both the operators and beneficiaries of these programmes. The officials of n-power display their lack of commitment through their weak supervisory roles. Most of the beneficiaries took this advantage and arranged with their unit heads of where they were posted and they abandoned their programmes, but still received their allowances at the end of every month. In the course of conducting the interview, most beneficiaries were not always on their place of primary assignment. There were places we visited up to eight times before we could get beneficiaries interviewed. We even had to trace some of them to where they live to get them interviewed.

(c) Insufficient Fund

Government could not provide sufficient funds to finance the programmes. The manner and strategy with which the implementation exercise was carried out was a clear evidence of lack of sufficient funds. For instance, there were no provision for logistics in terms of human capacity from the Federal Government who is in charge of these programmes. Enugu State Government also does not partner with the Federal Government to provide for logistics. Since government does not provide for logistics, most implementation activities that involved spending money were either over-looked, or poorly handled. This, of course is the major reason for the poor management of supervisory roles. Also to be taken into consideration is the challenges faced by the Government Enterprise and Empowerment programmes (GEEP) in which the intending beneficiaries found it difficult to access the website of Bank of Industry to access loan. All these are associated with insufficiency to fund. These findings are in line with the assertion of Ebiri et al (2017) who noted that even though beneficiaries have been deployed to work in various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA's), beneficiaries have not been paid their stipends in the last three months. They therefore decried the level of funding of the programmes.

(d) Communication Gap between the Operators and Beneficiaries of the Programme

There is a very big communication gap between the operators and the beneficiaries of n-power programmes in Enugu State. Issues such as irregular and denial of payments, which is supposed to be treated with urgency, continues to linger because of communication gap between the operators and beneficiaries. Sometimes beneficiaries became frustrated and confused after presenting their complaints but discovered that nothing was done. The finding conforms to Report Presented by the State Economic and Planning Commission (2019) which stated that one of the challenges faced by N-Power programmes in Enugu State is Communication gap between Abuja and State.

(e) Non-transparency in Selection of Beneficiaries

Another major problem related to the implementation of N-Power programmes is the issue of selection. The process involved in the selection of beneficiaries was not transparent. Majority of the candidates that applied for the programme were not selected, and there was no explanation for dropping their names. It was also discovered that the selection of N-Power beneficiaries were not distributed in accordance with the three geo-political zones of Enugu States. This has however resulted in some zones crying that they have been marginalized.

The findings emanating from objective two showed that there is no significant relationship between N-Power programmes and poverty reduction in Enugu State. The study revealed that N-Power programmes have not reduced the poverty level of the beneficiaries. Some of the beneficiaries even complained that their poverty level has increased ever since their involvement in N-Power programmes. This was as a result of trying to finance their re-location to area of their posting. Therefore, the question about N-Power

programmes reducing poverty has been ruled out completely. This finding is in line with Abdulhadi (2003) cited in Adamu and Inuwa (2016) which states that to reduce poverty, and improve the quality of life in Nigeria will require a sustained economic growth.

The major objectives of N-Power programmes in Nigeria are to create jobs and employment for our unemployed youths, and by extension reduce the level of poverty among our youths. Studies have shown that enhancement of human capital in terms of skills, resource knowledge, work proficiency and quality of labour possessed can lead to individual well-being and reduce the level of poverty (Okwu et al, 2022). With the report of National Bureau of Statistics (2016), Enugu State has a population of about 4,411,100 citizens. About half of this population is made up of unemployed youth (NPC 2013). The State Economic planning Commission (2019) presented a report showing that 16,542 youths benefitted so far from n-power programmes in Enugu State. Comparing the population of the unemployed youths with the number that benefitted, one cannot confidently say that significant number benefitted let alone boast that N-Power programmes have reduced their poverty level significantly. The initiatives such as N-Power programme, simply bring a selected group of youth into employment, but are grossly inadequate to accommodate the army of unemployed youths. Besides, the programmes are conceived with short-term gains in mind, and little consideration of long term perspectives that may change the dynamics of unemployment substantially. The structural changes needed to involve taking a comprehensive approach to employment issues in general.

From this study we found out that N-Power programmes were poorly implemented in Enugu State. The study identified a number of factors that impede the implementation of these programmes. Even though these factors are in order because they can have serious consequences for policy implementation in any country, however, they were not adequate enough for understanding the poor implementation of N-Power programmes. The fundamental issue is that poor implementation of N-Power programmes in Nigeria is to be located in the character of Nigeria State, whereby those in power; the ruling elites, use their absolute and arbitrary power to control, manage and manipulate government policies to their selfish interest.

N-power programmes were not in any way designed to succeed. It is just one of those poverty alleviation/reduction programmes which the Federal Government of Nigeria wants to use and get the attention of the poor masses, to make them believe that Government have their interest in mind. It is one of the strategies that government wanted to use to deceive and subdue the poor masses, to remain silent in order to make the country governable for them, while they divert the resources of the state into their private pockets. If the Federal Government, who initiated this programme had wanted it to succeed, they know what to do. N-Power programmes have some inherent bad structures that will not allow implementation to function properly.

All these problems encountered that made the programme difficult to implement was planned and stage – managed. Otherwise, the Federal Government should have anticipated and planned for how to tackle these problems and included it on the establishment framework before the take-off of the programmes.

N-Power programme is a social investment programme and it is expected that every youth should benefit. A situation where we have about 2 million unemployed youths in Enugu State and only about 16,542 youths benefitted means that N-Power programme is selective. It is clear that the programme is not meant for unemployed youths. It is very normal that whenever a programme requires that candidates that should benefit should be selected, the usual experience is that those in charge of the programme, should select their own candidates. It therefore follows that in this type of programme, the elites have made maximum use of this opportunity by selecting their own candidates to be the beneficiaries. If the federal government of Nigeria is serious and wants to address the poverty issue among the youths government should implement a policy or programme that will benefit everybody and not a programme that will benefit the few.

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the present situation of youths in Enugu State one can infer that there is no significant relationship between N-Power programmes and poverty reduction. By this we mean that N-Power

programmes have not reduced the poverty level among the youths. This is maybe because of the challenges that does not allow for good implementation of the programme.

Some of these challenges include lack of adequate infrastructure, insufficiency of fund, gap in communication and intransparent selection. These problems were allowed to penetrate because our ruling elites were not committed to policies and programmes designed for the poor masses. They were using these challenges to manipulate, manage and control the programme for their own benefits. Therefore, based on the findings, the study recommends:

That selection of N-Power beneficiaries should be made transparent enough and should be devoid of political sentiments but based on equity and fairness, so that every eligible youth stands a chance of benefitting from the programme.

Also the research recommends that government shall provide adequate and quality infrastructure, not only in selected states, but also to all the states in Nigeria, so that beneficiaries will be allowed to acquire skill and develop their potentials in their respective states.

Furthermore, there is need for government to provide and release sufficient funds for the programmes, so that all the implementation activities that involve spending money will not be abandoned. This is to ensure the smooth running of the programmes.

Finally, government should show their commitments by addressing the fundamental problems of the ruling elites in Nigeria. There is need to review the structure and strategies of n-power programmes in Nigeria, to make it implementable. There is need to involve, not only the ruling elite class, but also the poor people in the formulation and execution of the programmes. This will help a long way as there will be checks and balances between the roles to reduce the powers of the elite class and prevent them from using their absolute powers to control, manage and manipulate, not only n-power programmes, but also all other poverty related programmes in Nigeria. This idea will help and reduce some challenges faced in the implementation processes of the programme such as gap in communication etc. When all these are done, our expectations are that n-power programmes will be well implemented, and the aims and objectives of the programmes will be achieved which will lead to reduction of poverty among the youths in Enugu State and Nigeria at large.

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