VOL. 07 NO. 6,
FEBRUARY, 2025
E-ISSN 3027-1401
P-ISSN 3026-9148

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)

N-Power Scheme and the Standard of Living of the Beneficiaries in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria

Jibrin Mohammed Rabba; & Kamar Hamza PhD
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria
Corresponding Author: jibrinrabba@fedpolybida.edu.ng
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v7i6.009

Abstract
Standard of living is the amount of goods and services produced and available to purchase by a person, family, group, or nation. This paper aims to examine the impact of the N-Power programme initiated by the Buhari administration under the National Investment Programme (NSIP). The data for this was gathered through the instrument of questionnaire and review of past literature. The descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. Taro Yamane formula was adopted to determine the 224 sample size of the study. Simple percentages, tables were used to present the result while chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. The study was based on the postulations of the Empowerment theory. The paper revealed that the scheme has helped in the improvement of the standard of living of the beneficiaries in Bida LGA. The study recommends among others the availability of soft loans and grants for the beneficiaries while exiting the scheme.

Keywords: Social Investment, N-Power, Standard of living, beneficiaries, empowerment.

Introduction
Social problems were created by the neoliberal market based policy reforms put up in response to the global economic crises of the 1980s and early 1990s. Such reforms adopted by many developed and developing countries included spending cuts, retrenchments and privatization of public services (Peng, 2015). These policies resulted in increased poverty, social and economic inequality and human insecurity. It is against

this global policy backdrop that social investment perspective emerged in the late 1990s as a recalibration of the neo-liberal policy framework (Peng, 2015)

The high level of poverty in Nigeria has been orchestrated by low Gross Domestic Product (GDP), poor performance of the social sector, high level of insecurity (Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen attack) and high rate of unemployment, among others. As a means of addressing the widespread poverty, the Buhari administration instituted the National Social Investment Programme in 2016 (Onah and Olise, 2019). Poverty is the major determinant of low standard of living. The poverty level is extremely high. According to Onah and Olise (2019), it is estimated that 62.6 percent of the population live below the international poverty line (PPP US$1.25 per day) which translates to about 100 million Nigerians. Unemployment also doubled from 6.4 percent in 2014 to 14.2 percent in 2017 (FGN, 2017). There was also high rate of inequality (GINI Coefficient of 43 percent) not just with respect to income but also in terms of access to basic social services and opportunities. The recent food, fuel and financial crises have exacerbated hardships already facing the poor. To address the problem of poverty governments established various programmes. These include the first, second, third and fourth national development plans (1962 – 1985), the three year rolling plans (1990 - 1992), vision 2010 (1996 -1996), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2003 – 2007; National Poverty Eradication programme (NAPEP) (2001 – 2015). In all these, huge sums of money were sunk into the programme. Yet, no significant reduction in the poverty rate has been recorded rather the trend is on the increase.

In order to address this situation, the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari introduced the N-power scheme in 2016. N-Power is one of the five Social Investment Programmes of the Federal Government under the National Investment Programme (NSIP). The scheme according to Obadan (2017) was created to address the challenges of youth unemployment by providing a structure for large scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development while linking its core and outcomes to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the larger economy. Hence, N-power is a government policy that is geared towards addressing social problems in education, health, agriculture, poverty and even unemployment at all levels of government i.e. Federal, State and Local Governments.

The N-Power programme has been designed for young Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35. It is a paid volunteering programme of two year duration. In the specifications of the programme, graduates are required to undertake their primary tasks in identified public services within their proximate communities. All N-Power beneficiaries were entitled to computer devices that contained information necessary for their specific engagement, as well as information for their continuous training and development (N-Power Information Guide, 2017).

It is against this backdrop that this study attempts to examine the impact of the scheme on the improvement of the standard of living of the beneficiaries in Bida Local Government of Niger State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has N-Power impacted on the standard of living of the beneficiaries in Bida Local Government Area

2. What are the challenges facing the beneficiaries in Bida Local Government Area.

Conceptual Clarifications

Standard of living is the amount of goods and services produced and available to purchase by a person, family, group, or nation. It does not measure non material characteristics, such as relationships, freedom, and satisfaction (Amadeo, 2017). At the individual level, extreme poverty results in malnutrition, retarded growth, and stunting. Higher incomes enable individuals to purchase a better diet, and their weight also increases correspondingly. Nevertheless, once income is sufficient to satisfy caloric requirements, only modest increases are attainable through changes in the diet. Wealth may continue to rise with income because individuals purchase more or better housing and medical care (Abu Husein, Al-Sukkar, Salah and Jaradat, 2013). As income increases, consumption patterns change. Environmental variables are not too powerless after attaining the capacity for growth.

The standard of living is measured by things that are easily quantified, such as income, employment opportunities, cost of goods and services and poverty. The Human Development Index (HDI) measures standard of living by considering life expectancy, gross national income and expected years of schooling to measure a country's development. Therefore, an individual can only be considered to have a decent standard of living when he or she has access to good health care, healthy environment, good housing and quality education.

Overview of the N-power Programme in Nigeria

N-power is a National Social Investment Programme of the Federal Government aimed specifically at job creation and youth empowerment through human capital development. In essence, one of the objectives of the programme was to boost the human capital of the Nigeria labour force (N-Power Information Guide, 2017). The human capital boost appears to be in area of youth employment which was intended to be addressed through youth empowerment. Youth empowerment was to be ensured through skill acquisition and development of youth in critical sectors such as education, health and agriculture. The core objective of the programme seems to hinge on skill acquisition and development of the Nigerian youth, both educated and non-educated, who had minimal hope of securing jobs, even at the minimum level needed to survive or raise a family (Okoro and Bassey, 2018; N-Power Information Guide 2017). In addition, the programme was designed to fill the unemployment gaps in the teaching profession in primary schools and to assist in taking basic education to children in remote areas, especially the marginalized communities. Furthermore, the programme was also created to provide manpower to primary health care centres in communities that appear to be under staffed while also providing manpower in the area of agricultural business (Okoro and Bassey, 2018).

The programme is available for graduate and non-graduates. It is aimed at inculcating in Nigerian youths the learn-work entrepreneurship culture between the ages of 18-35 (FGN 2018). It is specifically aimed at job creation and youth empowerment through human capital development. In essence, one of the objectives of the programme was to boost the human capital of the Nigerian labour force (N-Power Information Guide, 2017).

According to Kabeer (2018), the goals of the programme include; reducing the rate of unemployment in the country, facilitating the transfer of entrepreneurial, technical skills and employability ability and bringing solution to active public service and government diversification policy. Thus, Oyedele, Willoughby and Abdulganiyu (2020) emphasized that the programme is carefully designed in such a manner that if well implemented, can help in further addressing the challenges of unemployment and subsequently, reduce poverty among the Nigerian youths. The submission above implies that N-power will not only provide jobs to the youth but also equip the vulnerable segment of the society with necessary skills for the competing in a knowledge-driven economy.

The N-Power programme has the following main goals:

i. To intervene and directly improve the livelihood of a critical mass of young unemployed Nigerians.
ii. To develop a qualitative system of the transfer of employability, entrepreneurial and technical skills.
iii. To create an ecosystem of solutions for ailing public services and government diversification policies.
iv. To develop and enhance Nigeria's knowledge economy (N-Power Information guide, 2017)

N-Power programme 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.

Literature Review

Matthew and Matthias (2022) assessed the impact of N-Power Programme on Beneficiaries' Economic Life in Gombe State. The study discovered that the beneficiaries of N-Power programme were mostly composed of non-graduates which comprised secondary school leavers and other skill acquisition aspects followed by the N-Teach, Health strand, N-Agro and Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS) strands respectively. The study also found that N-Power has improved the standard of economic life of the beneficiaries through poverty reduction and proficiency skills in ICT among others. The study and the present study differs in terms of geographical location, the population of the study, sampling and sampling techniques, the review used secondary while the present study will use both primary and secondary.

Ayub and Gbaa (2020) stated that the N-Power programme has had great impacts on the socio-economic livelihoods of the beneficiaries including but not limited to ease of access to basic and daily needs, providing for families, ability to enroll for further studies, etc. The study further revealed that delay in payments, lack of continuity, inter alia were challenges posed to the programme. A study by Abin (2018) examined the impact of N-Power Programme on socio-economic lives of beneficiaries in Akwanga Metropolis of Nasarawa State. The study showed that the programme improved the socio-economic lives of the beneficiaries by contributing immensely to their financial, material and social-wellbeing. The study also indicated overwhelming satisfaction with the programme by the beneficiaries. To corroborate

this, the study by Odey and Sambe (2019) indicates that N-Power has contributed to the empowerment of youth in the study area including poverty reduction, financial independence and in setting up small scale businesses.

As a social investment programme, the N-Power is aimed at improving the standard of living of the beneficiaries. Ndagi (2021) corroborated this and stated that the N-Power envisions intervening and directly improving the livelihood of a critical mass of young unemployed Nigerians, to develop a qualitative system for the transfer of employability, entrepreneurial and technical skills, to create an ecosystem of solutions for ailing public services and government diversification policies, to develop and enhance Nigeria's knowledge economy. Thus, the N-Power is expected to have enormous impacts on the socio-economic livelihoods of the beneficiaries including easy access to basic and daily needs, catering for relatives, ability to enroll for further studies, etc

By acquiring practical skills that will allow them to make meaningful impact in their community, beneficiaries become innovative players in both global and domestic market. N-Power programmes if effectively implemented will provide 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.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the empowerment theory which involves the use of intervention methods to help guide people toward building autonomy and control in their lives. The major assumption of empowerment theory is that when individuals and communities are empowered they gain personal, interpersonal and political power to better their lives. This theory also strives to challenge systems that hinder these groups from meeting their needs (Zimmerman 1991). The theory recognizes that oppression is a primary contributor to disempowerment, which is experienced across a number of marginalized groups such as women and youth. The theory was popularized by Julian Rappaport. Rappaport (1981) proposed that empowerment should be the primary focus of governments. He believed that empowerment is about helping those with less than their fair share of power to understand their own situation and gain more power. The point of relevance of this theory to this study is that it advocates basic opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by those people, or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their own access to these opportunities. These opportunities could include job opportunities, skill acquisition, and improved standard of living among others. These are the basic aims of the N-power Social Investments Programme of the Nigerian Federal Government. The programme is geared towards graduate's job creation; poverty alleviation and empowerment initiatives through volunteering services. It is specifically aimed at job creation and youth empowerment through human capital development.

Methodology

The study used the survey research design. The quantitative data was gathered with the aid of a structured questionnaire to gather the perceptions of the respondents on the impact of N-power on standard of living among the beneficiaries in Bida local government. The entire targeted population of the study is 579 which include Batch A and Batch B 2016 beneficiaries of the N-power across the 9 selected wards of Bida local government, employing the Taro Yamane formula to arrive at a 235 sample size of the population. 224 questionnaires were successfully completed and returned which formed the basis of the analysis. Data is analyzed using SPSS 23.0 for quantitative analysis, applying chi-square tests to examine relationships between variables.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. Gender distribution of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Male	133	59.4
Female	91	40.6
Total	224	100.0

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 4.1 present the gender distribution of the respondents. It indicates that 133 respondents representing 59.4% are male while 91 respondents representing 40.6% are female. This shows that the beneficiaries of the N-Power in the study area are mostly male.

Table 2 Educational Qualification of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Degree	130	58.0
HND	94	42.0
Total	**224**	**100.0**

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

The table above shows the educational qualification of the respondents. It indicates that 130 respondents representing 58.0% of the entire population are BSC holders while 94 respondents representing 42.0% are HND holders.

Table 3 Impact of N-power scheme on the Standarrd of Living of the Beneficiaries in Bida Local Government.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Fianancial Independence	23	10.3
ICT Proficiency	40	17.9
Small scale business	11	4.9
Increased purchasing power	120	53.6
Health care accessibility	30	13.4
Total	**224**	**100**

Source: Field survey, 2025

The table above shows the extent of N-power's impact on the standard of living of the volunteers. 120 respondents which is the majority representing 53.6% of the entire population believed that the scheme has increased their purchasing power. This is followed by 40 respondents representing 17.9% have acquired ICT proficiency with the scheme, 30 respondents representing 13.4% have access to health care services which were hitherto difficult. 23 and 11 respondents representing 10.3% and 4.9% respectively have become financially independent and/or established a small scale business.

Table 4 Challenges facing the N-Power Scheme Bida Local Government

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Delayed payment	133	59.38
Lack of training	82	36.6
Distance of PPA	7	3.13
Enthusiasm of volunteers	2	0.89
Total	**224**	**100**

Source: Filed Survey, 2025

The table above shows the challenges facing the beneficiaries of the N-power scheme in Bida local government. It shows that the majority of the respondents 133 representing 59.38% face the problem of delayed payment of monthly stipend. This is followed by the challenge of lack of training opportunities in the scheme that will serve as capacity building of the beneficiaries, 82 respondents representing 36.6% observed this while 7 respondents representing 3.13% and 2 respondents 0.89% observed the challenge of long distance of their place of primary assignment and lack of enthusiasm on the part of some beneficiaries respectively as challenges.

Test of Hypothesis

Chi-square (x^2) statistical tool is used to test the hypothesis formulated for this investigation and question.

Chi-square $x^2 = \sum \frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe}$,

Where Fo = observed frequency and

Fe = expected frequency

Degree of freedom is determined by (r – 1) (c – 1)

Level of significance

Decision rule: if chi-square calculated (computed) value is greater than the chi-square (tabulated) value, the null hypothesis should be rejected otherwise it should be accepted. Therefore, the earlier formulated hypotheses stand to be rejected if chi-square calculated is greater than chi-square tabulated at 5% level of confidence but it shall be accepted if the shows otherwise.

Table 5

The impact of N-Power on the Standard of Living of the Beneficiaries in Bida LGA

			N-Power improves the standard of living of the beneficiaries
Chi-Square			381.791[a]
Df			16
Asymp. Sig.			.000
Monte Carlo Sig.	Sig.		.000[b]
	5% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.000
		Upper Bound	.000

a. 13 cells (52.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .25.
b. Based on 224 sampled tables with starting seed 926214481.

Table 5 shows the result of the chi square test of association to evaluate the impact of N-power on standard of living of the beneficiaries in Bida Local Government. From the table, the result shows that the p-value (assymp. Sig) = 0.000 is less than 0.005 significant level, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that N-power programme have significant influence (impact) the standard of living of beneficiaries in the study area.

Results and Findings

Findings from the research revealed that the N-Power has an impact on the standard of living of beneficiaries in Bida local government. This is premised on the responses from respondents that the scheme has given them access to more nutritious food, ICT proficiency and increased their purchasing power. This is supported by Matthew and Matthias (2022) who discovered that N-Power has improved the standard of economic life of the beneficiaries through proficiency skills in ICT. The segments of the programme as opined by Kehinde (2021) develops 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. This finding coincides with Ibrahim (2018) that N-Power Social Intervention Programme has enhanced youth skill acquisition and development. This is important because a significant focus of N-Power is to equip participants with employable skills. Egbetunde and Ogundeji (2021) found that beneficiaries acquired relevant skills across various modules of the scheme like agriculture, education, and healthcare, enhancing their employability and entrepreneurial capabilities

Conclusion

This paper examined the impact of N-Power on the improvement of standard of living of the beneficiaries in Bida local government. Based on the responses from the respondents and also the findings of previous researches, the paper concludes that the N-power scheme has had a significant impact on the improvement of the standard of living of the beneficiaries in the study area. These improvements as identified by the paper include access to healthcare service,

proficiency in ICT, increased purchasing power among others. The paper also identified various challenges such as the challenge of transportation and distance of Place of Primary Assignment, delay in the payment of stipend, lack of access to special training and seminar for personal development among others.

Recommendations

Owing to the challenges identified, the paper suggest as follows:

1. The study suggests that Government should offer an exit package to the beneficiaries. This will help in sustaining the achieved objective of the programme of taking the graduates off the streets.
2. Skills acquisition department should be introduced in to the scheme to boost the skill and self-employability of the beneficiaries.
3. Postings should be determined by beneficiary's proximity to place of primary assignment. This is to avoid issue of the beneficiaries spending most of their stipends on transport in order to save money for other meaningful ventures.

References

Alalade O, Longe M. P, Oluwatosin T. (2020) Perceived Effect of N-Power Scheme On Poverty Reduction Among Graduate Youths In Kwara State, Nigeria. Nigerian Journal of Rural Sociology Vol. 20, No. 1, 2020/77-82

Egbetunde, T. and Ogundeji, O (2021) N-Power Programme and Entrepreneurship Development among Nigerian Youth. International Journal of Business and Economic Development, 7(3), 58-71

Haruna, M. D. and Usman I. (2020) Prospects of N-Power Social Investment Programme on Reducing Unemployment in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State. Journal of Mgt. Science & Entrepreneurship. JMSE Vol. 20 (7) 2020 ISSN – 2370-9878 www.hummingpubng.com

Ifeanyichukwu, A. M. & Paul, O. H. (2019). Social intervention schemes and poverty alleviation among Nigerian Youths; Department of political science, international journal of scientific and research publications 9(9), 2250-3153

Ijoko, A. O, Balami, E. L. and Alkali, M. (2020) Review of the Contribution of N-Power Programme To Poverrty Reduction and Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. FUDMA Economic and Development Review Volume 4, Issue 2, 2020 Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361245042 on 16/12/2023

Kehinde, A. (2021). N-Power: FG spends over N360bn yearly on empowerment of graduates, non-graduates. "Tribute". December, 22

Kolawole, B. and Omobitan, A. (2015). Poverty, inequality and growth in Nigeria: An empirical evidence, Department of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos. Vol. 5 (1) Pp. 22-30.

Matthew F. B. and Matthias M. (2022) Assessment Of N-Power Programme On Beneficiaries' Economic Life In Gombe. Musamus Journal Of Public Administration Vol,V No,1 Electronic copy available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=4242884

National Population Commission of Nigeria (2016) National Bureau of Statistics. Assessed on 11th November, 2023, at www.n-power.gov.ng/about-us.html

N-Power Information Guide (2017). Federal Government of Nigeria National Social Investments Programme report. Pp 7.Retrieved from http://www.npower.gov.ng on 3/10/2023

NSIP (2020) https://statehouse.gov.ng/policy/economy/national-social-investment-programme/#) Retrieved on 20/11/2023

Obadan C. (2017) N-power progamme and Nigerian poverty indices, matter arising. International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research, 5(4), 1-13.

Onah, C. and Olise, C. N. (2019) National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) and Sustainable Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 24 (10), 20-31.

Saleh, M. A. (2019) Effects of Social Investment Programme (N-Power) on Standard of Living of Business Education Graduates in Kano State. European Scientific Journal August 2019 edition Vol.15, No.22 ISSN: 1857 Pg 205 – 212 Doi:10.19044/esj.2019.v15n22p205. Retrieved from URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2019.v15n22p205