

Impact of Skills Acquisition Opportunities on Youth Empowerment in Kazaure, Jigawa State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to provide relevant information on the impact of the National N-Power scheme on youth empowerment in Kazaure Local Government Area of Jigawa state. To achieve this aim, an ex post facto research design was adopted, then a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the 389 beneficiaries out of the whole population of 412 selected candidates of the 2022 batch C1, N-power youth in Kazaure. Thus census was used in selecting only the beneficiaries that completed the program in the study area. Data collected from the field was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics include frequency distribution, charts, simple percentages, means and standard deviation. The result from the descriptive statistics was then subjected to parametric statistics at 0.05 confidence level. The 389 returned questionnaires were used for analysis. From the analysis, it was discovered that nearly all the respondents (96.92%) were unemployed before becoming beneficiaries of the N-Power Scheme. It was also discovered that out of all the programs registered under the scheme, only three programs had beneficiaries in Kazaure, these were N-Teach, N-Agro and N-Build. From the analysis carried out using linear regression, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between N-Power and Youth Empowerment. Based on these findings the study recommends a need for an increase in the number of beneficiaries of the Scheme in Kazaure Local Government Area.

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KEYWORDS: N-Power; Skill acquisition; Youth; Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Since after the return of democracy in 1999, the government of Nigeria has focused on skill training as a measure for youth empowerment (Eze 2019). For instance, Uchenna Eme, and Okeke (2023) state that the Federal Government of Nigeria has initiated and launched diverse programmes and policies which include but not limited to: National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP, 2001), and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2003), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS, 2013), Youth Enterprise with Innovative Ideas in Nigeria (You-WIN, 2011-2014) and Subsidy Re-Investment Scheme (SURE-P, 2012) and the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) in 2016 as various strategic plans for job creation, poverty reduction and youth empowerment. All these schemes were geared towards exposing youth to skill building with a view to lessen the

consequences of unemployment and improve the economy.

Accordingly, the National Social Investment Programme NSIP being the most recent scheme is the focus of this research work. It is a conglomeration of four policy frameworks such as; Nigerian Youth Empowerment Programme (N-POWER), National School Feeding Programme, Conditional Cash Transfer and Government Enterprise Empowerment Programme (GEEP). The N-POWER is the flagship of the youth empowerment programmes (N-Power Information Guide 2017). It identified four key growth sectors with potential to create employment opportunities. These four sectors included construction, Information Communication Technology (ICT), agribusiness and agro-allied industries wholesale and retail trade. It is widely

agreed that, skill acquisition facilitates accumulation of different expertise that enhances task performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge (Magbagbeola 2004). Thus, relevance of skill acquisition on youth empowerment in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized.

However, despite these several efforts, Nigeria's skill level remains poor, and poverty and unemployment have continued to rise. Massive unemployment is a feature of the Nigerian economy, making its reduction one of the top priorities at all levels (Abada and Omeh 2019) Moreover, Bisong (2019) argued that, the level of trainees' interest in participating in skills acquisition programs, the quality of the training and its output, as well as the dearth of infrastructure and equipment have all contributed to the schemes' lack of results and sustainability in most parts of this country. This could be due to placing emphasis for political gains, absence of qualified trainers and failure of successive administrators to maintain the skills initiatives. As such, public trust in the previous youth skill acquisition programs has been lost since it failed to eradicate persistent youth unemployment among others. Consequently, this study aims to ascertain whether the N-power program in Kazaure Local Government Area has significantly impacted on the youth empowerment or not.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Skills Acquisition

A skill is an activity which is developed by a person with time and becomes automatic in terms of performing it. According to Inna (2018) Skill acquisition is the ability to acquire practical knowledge in new conditions and on the bases of the abilities and experiences a person had previously. It is the process of mastering skills characterized by applying them in particular situations. Inna 2018 further added that the entire life is based on skill acquisition which is a constant in process. No doubt, skill acquisition became more essential in view of the levels of youth unemployment in Nigeria today.

2.2. Trainee Mobilization for Skill Acquisition

Mobilization is basically a process through contacts and community outreach are made to identify and select the trainee for training program. Odey, and Sambe (2019) posit that, for thorough mobilization, it is very important to understand the socio-economic environment, population mix, employment opportunities, and culture. Thus, Mobilization and Selection of trainees with requisite aptitude depending upon the trade or job requirements. It involves visiting the area where candidate participation is highly required. However, challenges

in forms of nepotism, political influence and bias are faced while candidate's selection (Inna 2018).

2.3. The N-Power Skill Acquisition Program

N-Power is an integrative program of the National Social Investment Program of the Federal Government of Nigeria that provides a platform where most Nigerian youth between the ages of 18 and 35 can acquire skills and gain employment. It is a paid volunteering program for a two-year duration. In the specifications of the program, graduates are required to undertake their primary tasks in identified public services within their proximate communities (N-Power Information Guide, 2017).

2.4. The Principal Actors in N-Power Program

2.4.1. The Trainees

According to Eze (2019) Trainees of the N-Power are the targeted group that applied, screen and selected to be trained with incentive. They were drawn from the 774 local government areas of Nigeria. The beneficiaries would be trained to acquire the necessary skills required by various economic sectors with hope to specialize and recruit others. However, according to Bisong (2019), the number of volunteers so far is insignificant compared with the number of unemployed youths in Nigeria. Payment of stipends is often not paid on time, thereby forcing some of the volunteers to abscond or dodge work.

2.4.2. The Training Centres

The Training Centres are engaged to carry out the followings tasks: physical registration which involves confirmation of trainee identities, documentation, Orientation to introduce the centre's facilities, health and safety provisions and guidelines as well as the ground rules issued by the sponsors of the program. It also handles the placement of Trainees with Master Artisans; Periodic monitoring of the Trainees on the job sites; Relocation of Trainees to other sites where necessary; Preparation of assessment documents and folders; Collation of evidence submitted by Trainees; Supporting the Assessors, Verifiers and External Quality Assurance Officers during assessment and Forwarding records of the Trainees collected from Master Artisans

2.4.3. The Collaborators

Social intervention schemes are funded and implemented by both government and/or its agencies, international agencies and private sector entities. These schemes base on empirical evidence recorded some form of success. For example, the N-power Build program is being Facilitated, Monitored and Supervised by the collaborator, mainly government agency such as the Council of Registered Builders of Nigeria (CORBON), who facilitate the Assessment and Certification of both the Trainers and Apprentices

for the National Skills Qualification (NSQ) competency certificate in line with the guidelines of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). However, no adequate plan to transit these young beneficiaries into more meaningful ventures after training Ebelechukwu et al (2021).

3. Method

3.1. Study Area

Kazaure is an emirate and Local Government Area in Jigawa state with a land area of about 690 square miles. Similar to most of the local government in the Northern Nigeria, majority of population's employment vary across different sectors, including agriculture as a majority trade, healthcare and government services. Additionally, there may be opportunities in the private sector, such as; importation, retail, transportation and construction. The National Population Commission estimated the youth ages between 15 and 39 to make up to 67 per cent of the population of Kazaure. As such due to lack of industries in the area, one major problem that the local government face is unemployment.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1. Response on N-Power and Employment Creation

S/N	Question	N-Teach	N-Agro	N-Build
1	Which of the N-Power program are you a beneficiary	347 (89.20)	11 (2.83)	31 (7.97)

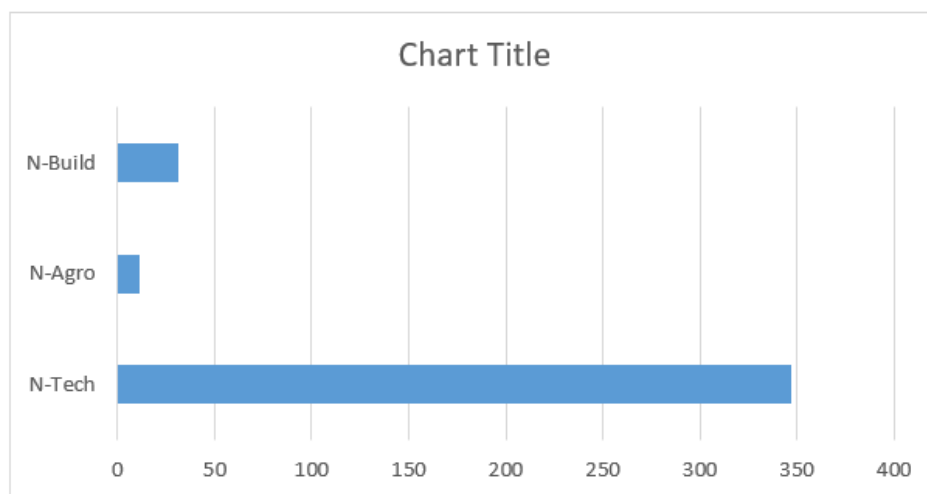
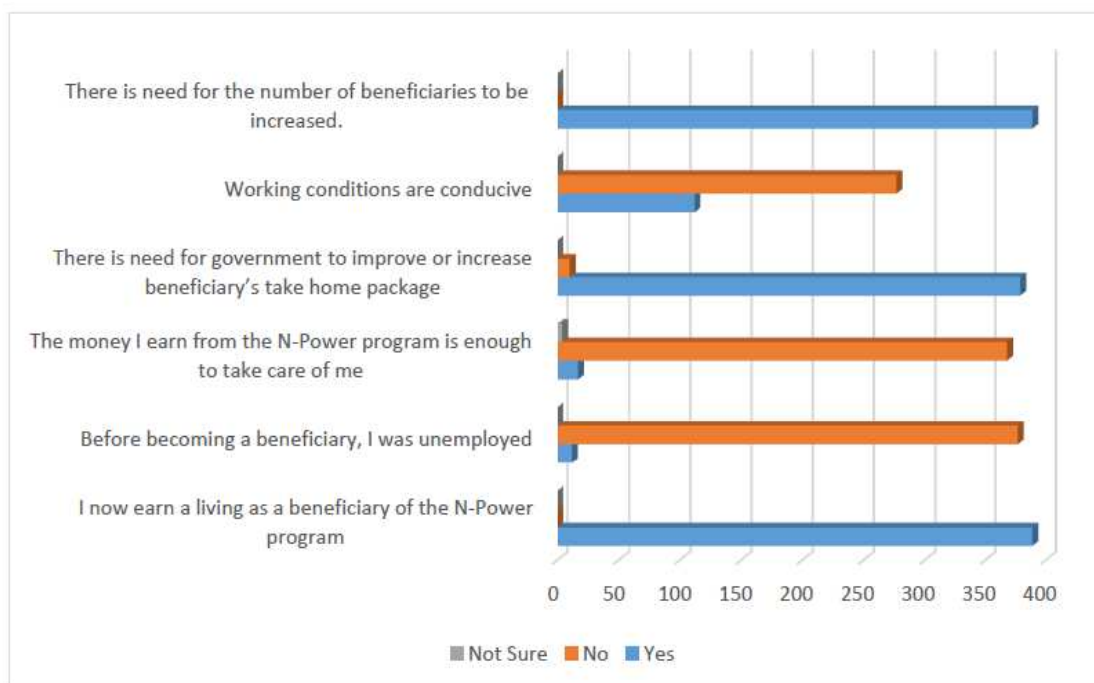


Table 2. Response on N-Power and Employment Creation

S/N	Question	Yes	No	Not Sure
2	I now earn a living as beneficiary of the N-Power	389 (100.00)	0	0
3	Before becoming a beneficiary I was unemployed	12 (3.08)	377 (96.92)	0
4	The money I earn from the N-Power program is enough to take care of me	17 (4.37)	368 (94.60)	4 (1.03)
5	There is need for government to improve or increase beneficiary's take home package	379 (97.43)	10 (2.57)	0
6	Working conditions are conducive	112 (28.79)	277 (71.21)	0
7	There is need for the number of beneficiaries to be increased.	389 (100.00)	0	0

**Fig. 2. Response on N-Power and Employment Creation**

Result from the descriptive analysis revealed thus; most of the respondents, 347, representing 89.20 per cent were beneficiaries of N-Teach, 11 respondents, representing 2.83 per cent were beneficiaries of N-Agro and 31 respondents representing 7.97 were beneficiaries of N-Build. On I now earn a living as a beneficiary of the N-Power program; all the respondents 389 representing 100% reported yes. On Before becoming a beneficiary, I was unemployed; 12 respondents representing 3.08% reported Yes, 377 respondents representing 96.92% reported No. On The money I earn from the N-Power program is enough to take care of me; 17 respondents representing 4.37 reported Yes, 368 respondents representing 94.60% reported No and 4 respondents representing 1.03% reported Not sure. There is need for government to improve or increase beneficiary's take home package; 379 respondents representing 97.43 reported Yes, 10 respondents representing 2.57% reported No. On Working conditions are conducive; 112 respondents representing 28.79% reported Yes, 277 respondents

representing 71.21% reported No. On There is need for the number of beneficiaries to be increased; All respondents 100% reported Yes.

4.2. Regression Analysis

The result from the descriptive analysis was subjected to simple regression analysis at 0.05 confidence level. Result is presented in table 3. The independent variable is N-power and dependent variable is Empowerment.

Table 3. Summary simple linear regression analysis of relationship between N-Power and Employment Creation

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mass transit	14.3425	3.20247
Scio economic wellbeing	44.6650	9.70455

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	F	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig
Regression	1184.812	1	12.958	0.178a	0.032	0.029	0.000 *
Residual	36392.298	398					
Total	37577.110	399					

The result of analysis as presented in table 3 revealed that the R-value of 178 is significant at 0.05 alpha level (p-value of .000 is less than 0.05). This implies that there is a significant relationship between N-Power and Empowerment. Also, the R^2 – value of 0.32 implies that only 32% of total variance is accounted for by predictor variable (N-Power). Furthermore, the regression ANOVA revealed that, there was a moderate joint linear association (contribution) of the predictor variables (N-Power) on employment creation given by the F-ratio (1, 398) = 12.958; $p < 0.05$. The adjusted R^2 (.029) shows some shrinkage of the unadjusted value (.032) indicating that the model could be generalized on the population. Based on the result, it was concluded that the N-Power programme has significantly created employment for youths in Kazaure Local Government Area of Jigawa State, Nigeria.

4.3. Discussion of Findings

Result gathered from the field revealed that from the N-Power scheme, N-Teach is the most popular, with 89.20% of all the respondents engaged in the Teachers program. This is followed by N-Build, which had 7.97% of the scheme beneficiaries and then N-Agro, which had just 2.83% of the beneficiaries in Bekwara. There were no beneficiaries of other N-Power schemes in Kazaure. From the result analyzed it was discovered that nearly all the respondents (96.92%) were unemployed before becoming beneficiaries of the N-Power Scheme. This implies that most of the beneficiaries of the scheme joined the program as a result of being unemployed. But a large majority of the beneficiaries, 94.60%, point out that the take-home package they receive for

the scheme is too small and call for improvement in the benefits.

From the analysis carried out using linear regression, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between N-Power and Employment Creation. This is because, the R-value of .178 is significant at 0.05 alpha level (p-value of .000 is less than 0.05). Also, the R^2 –value of 0.32 implies that only 32% of total variance is accounted for by predictor variable (N-Power). Furthermore, the regression ANOVA revealed that, there was a moderate joint linear association (contribution) of the predictor variables (N-Power) on employment creation given by the F-ratio (1, 398) = 12.958; $p < 0.05$. Based on the result, it was concluded that the N-Power programme has significantly empowered youths in Kazaure Local Government Area of Jigawa, Nigeria. This finding is similar to that of Bisong (2019), whose study on the impact of N-power scheme on employment creation, job skill enhancement and the economic wellbeing of the beneficiaries in southern sensational distract of cross river state found a significant relationship between the N-power and employment creation, job still enhancement and economic wellbeing. The study of Odey and Sambe (2019) examined the impact of N-power on youth empowerment in Cross River State, Nigeria found that the N-power scheme significantly contributed to financial empowerment and skill development.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has offered empirical information on the N-Power Skill Acquisition Opportunities on Youth Empowerment in Kazaure, Jigawa State. Based on

this finding, the study calls for an improvement in the number of beneficiaries of the Scheme in the study area. The government also need to create an enabling environment that will encourage private investments in the scheme, since the government cannot bear the unemployment burden alone. There is also the need to improve the take home package of beneficiaries.

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