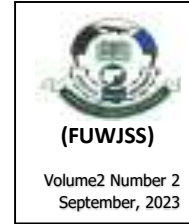


**INCOME POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH
N-POWER SCHEME IN IKPOBA OKHA
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,
EDO STATE, NIGERIA**



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Abstract

This study examines how the N-Power scheme has worked to reduce income poverty among participants in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. The study utilized the empowerment theory as the framework of analysis. The population of the study comprises N-Power enrollees who served in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Edo State. The study's sample consists of three hundred and thirty respondents who responded to the study's questionnaire. The study's major results revealed that the N-Teach component of the N-Power scheme had a strong positive impact on income poverty reduction among participants in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. The study concludes that the N-Teach component of the N-Power scheme largely contributed to the reduction of income poverty among participants in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Edo State. Consequently, the study recommends that successive governments in Nigeria should consolidate and deepen the N-Power scheme so that more unemployed Nigerians can benefit from the scheme.

Keywords: N-Power, Scheme, Poverty, Income, Ikpoba Okha

Introduction

The second Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) espoused the need for governments across the globe to fashion out appropriate social protection interventions to end poverty in all its forms by the year 2030. Poverty according to the United Nations is the inability to get opportunities and choices, and a violation of basic human rights and dignity (United

Nations, 2011; Okalow, 2023). Poverty has many forms which include: income, food, housing, education, and consumption poverty (Okalow, 2023).

Income poverty denotes a lack of access to economic resources (income) to satisfy basic material needs. A person is considered poor if the person's or household's income cannot acquire basic goods and services needed for their overall well-being (Touray, 2016). Income poverty could be broken down into relative income poverty and asset poverty (Collins, 2016). Income poverty particularly looks at the percentage of the population or the number of citizens that earn less when compared to average earning in a country. On the other hand asset poverty incorporates the measure of wealth and transformative assets (Collins, 2016).

Accordingly, three main types of income have been identified. These include earned, passive, and portfolio income (Medallia, 2022). Earned income includes wages, salary, tips, commission, stipend, and conditional cash transfer. More so, passive or unearned income could come from rental properties, royalties, and limited partnerships. On the other hand, portfolio or investment income includes interest, dividends, and capital gain on interest (Medallia, 2022). In the absence of income or insufficient income, many families or persons find it extremely difficult to meet living expenses. This can lead to indebtedness from borrowing money to support one's needs, use of savings, or even to homelessness and malnutrition if individuals are unable to find other sources of finance (Hinteregger, 2017).

Social protection programmes is one of the tools used by government across the globe to reduce extreme poverty, and unemployment, and promote social inclusion among others (United Nations, 2018). In 2016, the former Nigerian president, Muhammadu Buhari, introduced the N-Power scheme as a component of the National Social Investment Programme (N-SIP) with the overall objective of using it to pull 100 million Nigerians out of extreme poverty within 10 years (Onyedinefu, 2023). However, since its introduction, it is still unclear to know the exact contributions of the National Social Investment Programme in reducing income poverty in Nigeria. In their year 2022 Annual Poverty Report, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) hinted that 133 million persons, representing 63% of Nigerians, are still multi-dimensionally poor (Ogunyemi, 2022). Being multi-dimensionally poor implies that three out of every five Nigerians do have at least two dimensions of extreme poverty which include income and food poverty. Considering the serious investment of the whopping sum of about 1.3trn Naira by the immediate past regime of ex-president Muhammadu Buhari in funding the National Social Investment Programme (N-SIP) since its inception in 2016 (Onyedinefu,2023); this study therefore seeks to explain how the N-Power Scheme, a component of the National Social

Investment Programme, has contributed to reduce the income poverty of participants in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria.

Globally, many governments too lack the ability and willingness to provide support to struggling citizens faced with income poverty. In wealthy countries like Canada, government support to citizens may include food assistance, free healthcare, low-income housing, low-income tax credits, training programmes, and financial assistance (Abulencia, 2022). In Nigeria, the social welfare schemes to support citizens include the “N-Power programme”, “Trader and Market and Farmers’ initiative”, “Conditional cash transfer programme”, “Beta don come”, and the “National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP)” with the motive to reduce extreme poverty before the year 2030 (Nwannekanma & Musa, 2022).

Specifically, N-Power is a national social protection project that involves the temporary recruitment of unemployed graduates and non-graduates between the age of 18 and 35 to work mainly as teachers, healthcare givers, and agricultural extension workers during which they are paid Thirty Thousand naira (#30,000) monthly stipends (Nwannekanma & Musa, 2022). The overarching objective of the scheme is to help the Federal Government reduce youth unemployment, extreme poverty, and by extension income poverty (Nwannekanma & Musa, 2022; Sanni 2020). Participants are selected from the 36 states of the Federation after an online assessment test via an online recruitment portal. Successful candidates are deployed to the state of residents where they are managed and supervised by an N-Power state focal person. So, more than five hundred thousand (500,000) Nigerian youths have benefitted from the scheme’s batches A, B, and C, since its inauguration (Nwannekanma & Musa, 2022).

The N-Power programme has also been implemented in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. However, it is still not clear how the N-Power programme has contributed to reduce income poverty in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. It is in this light that this study intends to evaluate how the N-Power programme has been able to reduce the income poverty of participants in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria.

The N-Programme and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

Ogbette, Bernard-Oyoyo & Okoh (2019) examined how N-Power programmes were used in creating jobs for unemployed Nigerians under the All Progressive Congress government in Nigeria. Their study utilized desk analysis. Findings from the study revealed that the N-Power initiative has engaged many Nigerians who have become resourceful, innovative, and productive all day round. Findings also showed further that the N-Power

programme was introduced by the federal government to address the increasing unemployment level in the country which according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics stood at 23.1% in the year 2018. To remedy the unemployment problem in Nigeria, the authors recommended a total overhaul of the school curriculum by the federal government in such a manner that robust attention is devoted to vocational studies in an eight-semester course duration in higher institutions of learning. With this, students will develop the attitude and mindset of job creation and it will enable the government to solve the mirage of social problems bedeviling our country. More so, it was also recommended that the federal government should trim down the cost of governance to have more funds to engage more N-Power participants and in addition increase the number of N-Power beneficiaries with a good exit package. The reason is to enable all discharged N-Power beneficiaries to stand on their own, after two years of disengagement. The authors are criticized for being too apolitical in their choice of topic. But they are appreciated highly for their brilliant recommendations which are geared towards the promotion of entrepreneurship and job creation initiative as well as income poverty reduction among participants.

Adeyanju (2020) examined young graduates' perception of the N-Power Programme and its Impact on Poverty Alleviation in the Nigerian space. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The respondents for the field work were made up of the 150,000 selected graduates employed in 2016 and they were selected from the 36 states of Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory: They were stratified into four zones. Questionnaires and interviews were the major instruments of data collection. Findings from the research showed that the N-Power scheme has significantly reduced graduates' poverty alleviation with a corresponding impact on males' and females' poverty alleviation. Arising from the findings above, it was recommended that the monthly stipends payable to beneficiaries by the Federal Government be increased so that they can meet up with the economic realities in the country. It was also recommended that the government should look inward by giving additional incentives to male and female graduates in the form of loan facilities, and scholarships amongst others. The researcher is commended for a good research endeavour by drawing up a good sample size that is representative. However, this study will build on the above gains to narrow its population to particular a Local Government Area, so that less verbose data can be utilized that will be good enough for an apt and robust conclusion to be arrived at.

Oyekunle (2020) examined youth unemployment and poverty through social investment programme in Nigeria. The study measures the effectiveness and impact of one of Nigeria's Social Investment Programme

christened N-Power, used in the creation of short-term jobs, to lift thousands of youths from income poverty in the Nigerian space. The study population comprises N-Power participants in selected Local Government Council Area of Osun State of South Western region. Also, the research methodology employed participatory approaches. Findings from the research show that the N-Power programme has contributed immensely to improving the well-being of participants through a well-organized poverty reduction effort in the study area, enhanced the working capital of participants to expand their business and keep the spirit of entrepreneurship participants potent and strong. Also, findings showed further that participants have acquired skills in various vocations and trades to start their businesses in the study area. In addition, the researcher raises some pertinent recommendations which include: an increase in the monthly income of participants, as the Thirty Thousand Naira (#30,000) was grossly inadequate. It also showed from the study that participants made strong requests to the government at all levels for them to be absorbed into government MDAs at the various levels of government. They also requested the establishment of a comprehensive and broad-based social security system in Nigeria which will take the form of direct cash transfer to jobless youth as obtained in advanced countries of the world. The author is commended for a good research endeavour that showed how the N-Power scheme has impacted beneficiaries positively in the studied area. This study will build on the research findings and recommendations advanced by the author to bridge the lacuna that may exist in knowledge.

The history of poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria predates her political independence. The process of evolving and implementing poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria was not an easy task. Based on this, different governments both military and civilian have come up with several intervention programmes in the past to reduce or alleviate poverty. Some of the major ones are explained in this section.

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)

In 1976, the military government inaugurated a national agricultural extension and mobilization programme called 'Operation Feed the Nation'. It was a well-thought-out policy on the part of the government to nip in the bold food importation and the increasing prices of food and boost the declining national food production in the country occasioned by the devastating effect of stagnant crop production, increase in oil revenue and the negative consequences of drought in Sahel region of the mid-1970s. The move led to a general increase in the price of commodities and a massive inflow of food products into the country, thereby making Nigeria rely more on imported food to feed its growing urban population (Arua,1982). The

Operation Feed the Nation programme was formally launched by General Olusegun Obasanjo the then Head of State in May 1976. To effectively implement the policy mandate of the programme, a passionate appeal was made to the authority of high schools, colleges, and institutions of learning on the need for them to redouble their effort in their farm produce. In addition to that, biology and agricultural teachers were sent for further studies to improve their curriculum and teaching. Secondary and tertiary institution students were also advised to work on farms during extended vacations. Apart from extension support to farmers, the participation was also visible in the area of subsidized fertilizer distribution, agricultural loans with affordable interest were given to farmers to embark on large-scale farming, poultry birds were also distributed to farmers, and aircraft purchased to spray pesticides amongst others (Forrest 1982 cited in www.wikipedia.com). Despite the beautiful design of the programme, a few years into its life span, its policy failed woefully to achieve the desired goals and scholars attributed its failure to inconsistency agricultural policy, inadequate provision of fertilizer to farmers as well as centralization of implementation on the federal government alone. These were some of the factors responsible for the failure of Operation Feed the Nation (Nzeshi, 2006).

The Green Revolution Programme (GRP)

The Green Revolution Programme (GRP) was giving birth to in April 1980 by the civilian Administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari following the administration's desire to boost agricultural production and ensure Nigeria attained self-sufficiency in basic food production in five years and returned to its green old-day when Nigeria was a leading exporting country in food production before oil boom era. However, from all intent and purpose, the GRP was a core component of a government development strategy designed not only to further agricultural and rural development but was an antidote for Nigeria's industrial development. In the early years of the programme, implementation of the initiative failed to achieve its purpose as it was bedeviled with enormous problems which included: over-ambitious and unrealistic targets, absence of rural infrastructure, promotion of inequality, presence of portfolio farmers accessing the loan as against real farmers, absence of cost-benefit analysis, lack of clarity in goal, absence of mass participation, emphasis on state directions, and proliferation of authority (Oyatoye, 1983).

The Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)

DFRRI was a comprehensive approach to the development of rural communities. It came into existence through the military regime of IBB, then

military president of Nigeria in the year 1986. It was a poverty intervention programme centered on alternative traffic roads, electrification of rural communities, and clean pipe-borne water with the sole purpose of providing the basic infrastructure to propel the growth of agro-allied and micro-scale industries in rural communities. Between 1986 and 1993 when the programme was operational, DEFFRI had a tremendous impact on the well-being and economic life of rural areas. For example, available statistics show that between 1996 to 1993, DFRRRI completed more than 279,526 rural electrification projects and there was a tremendous rise in agricultural output (Ogwumike, 1998 cited in CBN Annual Report, 1998 & CBN, Statistical Bulletin, 1998). Despite some significant progress recorded by DFRRRI, many of its objectives were left unachieved due to some constraints like the absence of existing rules for project synchronization and workable procedures for coordination, and several other challenges that led to its sudden collapse. The programme was a well-thought-out initiative for the rural approach to poverty reduction. However, DFRRRI must be applauded for the feat it achieved in the aforementioned period.

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

The National Poverty Eradication Programme was introduced in 2001 by the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, with the sole aim of using it as an instrument to reduce poverty in Nigerians. It replaced the long-aged Poverty Alleviation Programme. The goal of NAPEP included the training of youths in vocational business and skills acquisition, organising internship programmes for beneficiaries to enhance their employability, giving microloan credit facilities, generating jobs in the automobile industries, and helping in the treatment of Vesicovaginal fistula (VVF) patients. The initiative was seen by many as an advancement over past Nigerian government poverty alleviation initiatives because it successfully trained well over one hundred and thirty thousand (130, 000) youths and engaged two hundred and sixteen thousand (216, 000) beneficiaries in different vocational businesses and skills of their choice (Obadan, 2002). The programme like any other Nigerian poverty alleviation programme is applauded highly for leaving beyond the administration that inaugurated it until it was bedeviled with corrupt practices and other associated problems during President Goodluck Jonathan's Administration.

The N-Power Programme

N-Power scheme is one of the Social Investment Programmes inaugurated by Buhari's administration which was birthed on the 8th of June 2016 with the objectives of addressing the challenge of youth unemployment, poverty reduction, increasing social development amongst

Nigerian youths to acquire and develop long-lasting skills for self-reliance to contribute its quarter to the overall development and growth of Nigeria and above all to reduce poverty. The scheme involves the temporary recruitment of unemployed graduates and non-graduates between the ages of 18 and 35 to work mainly as teachers for a minimum period of two years during which they are paid #30,000 monthly stipends (Kunle, 2018). Beneficiaries are selected from the 36 states of the federation after an online assessment test via an online recruitment portal. Successful candidates are deployed to the state of residents where they are managed and supervised by an N-Power state focal person. So far, more than five hundred thousand (500,000) Nigerian youths have benefitted from the scheme's batch A, B, and C, since its inauguration in 2016 (www.npower.gov.ng). N-Power programme can be categorised into six namely: N-Teach, N-Health, N-Build, N-Creative, N-Agro, and N-Tax. Beneficiaries can serve in any of the categories above.

Causes of Income Poverty in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the causes of income poverty are manifold, some of the major ones are identified as:

Lack of financial safety nets

Financial safety nets are resources set aside for use during difficult situations or one-off expenses. Examples are insurance policies, small loans, and savings accounts among others. Their foremost purpose is to ensure that a person or family can overcome financial difficulties that may be caused by mounting debt, sudden loss of livelihood, illness, natural disaster, or other unforeseen circumstances. In the absence of a financial safety net, one huge expense can cause an individual to become income-poor and create long-lasting problems spanning generations (Abulencia, 2022).

Poor basic infrastructure

The absence of top-notch modern infrastructure can keep people in perpetual income poverty, which would affect the economic strength of individuals, communities, and the entire country. A few examples of basic infrastructure are roads, electricity, water networks, railways, mass transit, and telecommunication services. Without these basic infrastructures, communities can remain isolated from the rest of the world, especially in rural settlements. A province without a sufficient road network can't form a trading network that would guarantee a stream of income needed to suppress income poverty. Therefore, lack of access to basic services, education, and employment opportunities all serve to perpetuate income poverty (Abulencia, 2022).

Climate change

Climate change is one of the chief contributors to income poverty and death in the world nowadays. Extreme drought can destroy harvests, forcing people to migrate to survive. Also, climate change is causing an increase in the number of forest fires and wildfires. With all these factors combined, the World Bank estimates that 132 million people will be pushed into income poverty in the next ten years. The most vulnerable are from the third-world countries (Abulencia, 2022).

Inequality or social justice

Inequality happens when one group has fewer resources and opportunities than others. It can be caused by factors like gender, race, economic situation, social status, age, and physical ability. More so, gender discrimination remains a pervasive cause of inequality and cause of income poverty in many parts of the world. An example is the underrepresentation of women in running public affairs in many countries. In addition, it's much more difficult for women to own economic property such as agricultural land. There are also limiting cultural factors that discriminate against women and girls which in the long run contribute to income poverty of women (Abulencia, 2022).

Conflict and Instability

Conflict and instability are among the prevalent causes of income poverty globally. Conflict can refer to an armed struggle or protracted violence. Whether conflict happens across borders or within a country people's lives can be devastated, especially when forced to migrate to a safer place. For children of school age, this could mean months or years of out-of-school. Adults often lose jobs, careers, and livelihoods. For example, the frequent violent attack in many parts of Northern Nigeria is found to be the major cause of income poverty in that region (Abulencia, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The study leverages on Empowerment theory postulated by Barbara (1976) in his book titled *Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities*. The theory stressed the need for people to avail themselves of appropriate skills, capabilities, resources, and access to secure sustainable income for a decent livelihood. The theory found usefulness in this study as it is predicated on the fact that empowerment serves as an instrument by which the extremely poor, disadvantaged, vulnerable individuals, the down-trodden and the socially excluded persons in the society are well educated to exercise their rights, obtain access to resources and participate actively to

contribute to the growth and development of the society (Luttrel, Quiroz, Scrutton & Bird 2009).

The introduction of the N-Power scheme by the immediate past regime of ex-President Muhammadu Buhari was designed to strengthen the poor, reduce income inequality, and empower the citizens who have no legitimate means of livelihood to develop their full potentials, to be self-reliant and have self-confidence to be solution providers. Social protection programme like N-Power has helped greatly to reduce income poverty and income poverty inequality and check economic inequality and social exclusion. Participants of this noble scheme through the skills acquired and the money saved from their monthly stipends have been able to establish themselves. They have also been able to contribute positively to the overall economic growth of the society at large.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the mixed research method that involves the collection of primary qualitative-quantitative data and the systemic review of secondary data relating to the N-Power scheme in Nigeria. The population of the study wherein primary data for the paper emerged consists of batches A and B N-Power participants deployed to Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. The researcher utilized Taro Yamane's scientific approach to derive an optimal sample size of 338 N-Power participants.

Table: 1 Population and Sample Distribution Table

N-SIP	N-Power Beneficiaries	Proportional sample size using the Taro Yamni Scientific approach for each of the batches
Batch A	893	142
Batch B	1248	196
Total	2141	338

Source: Edo State N-SIP 2021 & Field Survey, 2022

The primary data collected from the field through questionnaires were analysed with simple percentages, after which the hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation statistical method. More so, so the interviews were also analysed such that the themes relating to the objectives of the study were discussed by corroborating them with related data obtained from secondary sources.

N-Power scheme and income poverty reduction among participants in Ikpoba Okha L. G. A. of Edo State

Table 2: The N-Power scheme has greatly helped in the income poverty reduction of participants in Ikpoba Okha L. G. A. of Edo State.

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	109	33	33
Agree	149	45	78
Valid Disagree	45	14	92
Strongly Disagree	27	8	100.0
Total	330	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Table 2 revealed that 33% strongly agreed that the N-Power scheme has greatly helped in income poverty reduction of participants, 45% of the sampled respondents agreed, 14% respondents disagreed, while the remaining 8% strongly disagreed that the N-Power scheme has greatly helped in income poverty reduction of beneficiaries. The analysis thus established that the majority of the sampled respondents agreed that the N-Power programme has greatly helped in the income poverty reduction of participants.

Table 3: Correlation between the N-Power programme and income poverty reduction of participants in Ikpoba Okha L.G.A. of Edo State.

Correlations

		N-power Programme	Income Poverty Reduction
N-power Programme	Pearson Correlation	1	.892**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	330	330
Income Poverty Reduction	Pearson Correlation	.892**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	330	330

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 revealed a positive relationship between the N-Power programme and income poverty reduction in Edo State due to the high rate of *R* coefficient which is 0.892, hence signifying a strong relationship between the N-Power programme and income poverty reduction in Edo State. The data from Table 3 also reveal a *p*-value (sig = 0.000) which is < 0.01, indicating that the researcher rejects the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the N-Power programme and

income poverty reduction in Edo State, and accepts the research hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between N-Power programme and income poverty reduction in Edo State.

The study established that the N-Power programme has a strong significant effect on income poverty reduction of participants against the non-beneficiaries in Ikpoba Okha L. G. A. of Edo State with a strong correlation coefficient *R*-value of .892, with the *p*-value (Sig = 0.000) less than (<) 0.01.

In consonant with the findings above, Gonzales, Chandra, Kochhar, Newiak & Zeinullayez (2015) argued that closing the income inequality gap between the rich and poor through deliberate empowerment and social welfare programmes from the government, private organizations or self-help is a sure way of alleviating income poverty among citizen population. This can be seen in Table 1 of this study where the majority of the respondents agreed (78% both strongly agreed and agreed) that the N-Power programme has contributed in no small ways to boost the income spending capacity of participants leading to a drastic reduction in their income poverty and improved well-being. This view was corroborated by the response of an interviewee who declared that:

There are so many beneficiaries whom I knew that have testified that before coming on board N-Programme, getting money for basic upkeep was a great challenge. But this social programme was able to provide them with a steady monthly source of income which reduced their income poverty challenge (IDI, Focal Person, Edo State Social Investment Programme Office, 26th May 2022).

I am one of the graduates in Gombe State who benefited from the N-Power scheme. Before I started earning from the programme, my income was unstable, and I usually disturbed my family members for personal needs and other sundry income for survival. But with the help of N-Power, I started meeting my personal and other income needs on my own. I was able to save #15000 every month which amounted to #480,000 which I used in the establishment of a patent medicine store which is now my source of livelihood, since I exited from the programme in June 2020. I am now fully self-dependent and even assisting other family members with income. The programme helped reduce my income poverty (Okah, 2021b).

Yet again another beneficiary declared thus:

I was listed for the N-Power scheme shortly after I completed my National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). I must confess that N-Power lifted me out of income poverty. After securing an N-Power job, I and other beneficiaries were given entrepreneurial training by the N-Power authority in Bauchi State, upon which I started rearing cattle. I later ventured into the fashion business by setting up a fashion outlet where I sell and make clothes. Everything is going well for me. I and my family members are no longer

apprehensive about how to get the money to meet the next meal. I have tailors working for me. All these were made possible from the savings I realized from the N-Power Intervention Scheme. I am no longer faced with an income shortage. Income poverty is permanently ameliorated in my life forever (Okah, 2021b).

The above discoveries are in tandem with Ibrahim & Uchendu (2020) that well-targeted social protection or social welfare schemes are viable options to bridge the income disparity between individuals, and households and by extension ameliorate income poverty. In a similar vein, the above responses were corroborated by an interviewee (N-Power beneficiaries) who shared their thoughts as follows:

I was engaged as an N-Agro beneficiary and got trained at Taraba Agricultural Development Office (TADP) on how to farm, cattle rearing, farm processing, and the techniques of selling farm produce. After the training, I immediately opted for dry rice farming, after saving #15,000 monthly from the N-Power stipend for a considerable period. This helped me to start rice farming with one hectare after which I expanded it to three hectares after being tutored and mentored by someone with long experience in that business. The business is doing well as I speak, I have four persons working for me and a supervisor living on the farm. At harvest time, I normally employ more workers. I feel pleased and joyful that I have enough income to reduce my income poverty and also solve the income challenge of other people. (Okah, 2021b).

Another N-Power official opined thus:

I know of Miss Efe in Ikpoba Local Government Area, a participant in this scheme, who was able to establish her cake-making business through the savings she made from the N-Power scheme. The same goes for Jude who was into beehive making. Both in a separate personal discussion told me that they don't see the need to hunt for white collar jobs anymore. They told me in confidence that what they have made from their private business within a short time is mind-blowing. These are good examples of how N-Power has helped in reducing the unemployment and income poverty levels in society (IDI, Programme Manager (N-Power Programme), Edo State Social Investment Office, 27th May 2022).

Again, another participant hinted and stated as follows:

The N-Power scheme has been a blessing to me. Before now, I was jobless and idle after completing my education, until I got an N-Power job. It is through the income I saved while the programme was ongoing that I used to start the business of selling children's clothes and wrappers. In a bid to expand my sales, I started moving from one ministry to another in my state of residence (Taraba State) selling my goods. As God will have it, I started having huge patronage to supply wrappers for wedding or naming

ceremonies. It was this business I engaged myself with after my batch was exited. I now have a constant inflow of income to survive, income poverty is history forever (Okah, 2021b).

Furthermore, according to Kopp (2019), income poverty is seen as an extreme disparity of income distribution with a high concentration of income usually in the hands of a small percentage of the population. When income poverty thus occurs, there is a large gap between the wealth of one population segment in comparison to another. Accordingly, income inequality and income disparity segregation can be analysed through a variety of segmentations such as occupation, industrial income, male and female, ethnicity, and geographical location. Segmentation of income disparity analysis is used for analysing different types of income distribution as income distributions by demographic segmentation form the basis for studying income poverty, income inequality, and income disparity. Alluding to the above, an interviewee declared thus:

N-Power monthly largesse made me an employer of labour. After I was shortlisted and knowing that the scheme had a time frame, I immediately started saving when I received my first stipends. It happens that I was among the first 200,000 that was engaged. I was able to open a cyber-café business from which I am feeding myself and even employ some staff. Honestly, the scheme has impacted my life positively and decreased my income poverty (Okah, 2021b).

I established a barbing saloon in Adamawa State, which I Christened Mino Barbers shop, from the savings I realized from the #30,000 N-Power monthly stipends. Before N-Power enrolment, I was into the sales of perfume by moving from one office to another which was very tasking and challenging. This was because people were buying on credit. So, when N-Power came on board I applied and I was selected, trained, and empowered. As the monthly stipends started coming in, I started saving, and thereafter I opened a barbing salon knowing well that the scheme is a transition intervention project of the federal government. After the end of my batch tenure, I retired to my saloon quietly for survival. As I speak, poverty income is a thing of the past (Okah, 2021b).

However, the above submission is in line with Chancel et al. (2019) who posited that government expenditure in the form of social intervention programmes was an important determinant of income poverty inequality. Also, the above agreed with the submission of N-Power beneficiaries who hinted thus:

Through the N-Power programme, I became an entrepreneur. Previously, life was very difficult for me until I was brought into the programme and started receiving stipends. Six months into the programme, I and nine (9) other enrollees started a monthly savings of #20,000 each. When it got to my turn, I judiciously utilized it to open a provision store in my community.

I am also into millet, groundnut, beans, and animal farming. I do buy ram and cow to fatten them up for sale during Eid-el-Kabir festivity. I now have income to spend regularly and my income poverty has greatly reduced (Okah, 2021b).

Consequently, another respondent declared thus:

I am a batch A N-Agro beneficiary from Taraba State. I applied for N-Power without knowing anybody and got selected. I had my training in Taraba Agricultural Development Programme (TADP). I also had two-week sessions with Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture where I acquired a lot of knowledge in the agricultural business value chain. I thereafter established a cattle-rearing business. As we speak, I sell cattle every two months for about #150,000 to #200,000. This has helped in addressing my poverty income challenge (Okah, 2021a).

Again, the above aligned with Ajibola, Loto, and Enilolobo (2018) who asserted that a moderate GDP growth rate, government expenditure on education, and empowerment programmes were among the leading factors responsible for income poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Based on the foregoing, the study established a correlation between the N-Power programme and the income poverty of beneficiaries with supporting data Table 2 shows 78% of sample respondents in agreement, and 22 % disagreement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study established that N-Power which is a component of the National Social Investment Programme N-SIP introduced by the immediate past regime of ex-President Muhammadu Buhari represented a viable tool for the reduction of income poverty of beneficiaries in the studied area. The study revealed that many beneficiaries who previously relied on friends and family members to survive became stable financially after their onboarding into the N-Power programme. More so, many of the participants through the N-Power programme became employers of labour by establishing their businesses. Examples of such include N-Agro, patent medicine, cattle rearing, farming, and clothes-selling business among others (Okah, 2021a & 2021b). All these were made possible through the savings they realized from their monthly stipends. A development that afforded beneficiaries with constant income to meet their personal needs and other sundry income for survival which reduced their income poverty challenge drastically. Therefore, the N-Power programme has a positive significant impact on the income poverty of participants. Based on the foregoing the study recommended that the incumbent administration of President Bola Ahmad

Tinubu should consolidate and deepen the N-Power programme, so that more unemployed Nigerians can benefit. Giving the enormous impact of the programme on beneficiaries since its inauguration. Moreso, that the monthly stipends of Thirty Thousand Naira (#30,000) payable currently to participants be increased in line with the current economic realities and that Government should invest massively in critical infrastructures such as modern road infrastructures, good security system among others geared towards the reduction of income poverty amongst the citizens and finally Government should evolve more income safety nets to accommodate other vulnerable groups apart from the unemployed Nigerians.

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