



ASSESSMENT OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPOWERMENT SCHEME (N-POWER) ON THE WELLBEING OF RURAL YOUTHS IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed the Government empowerment scheme (N-Power) on the wellbeing of rural youth in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents; identified the various categories of N-Power programmes that the youth benefited; determine the effects of N - Power scheme on skill enhancement; determine the effects of N-Power scheme on the wellbeing of the youth; and identify the constraints faced by the beneficiaries of N-power scheme in the study area. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study. The mean age of the respondents was 29 years. Majority (87.78%) of the respondents had tertiary education while more than half of the respondents (62.22%) were married with mean household size of 4 persons. The mean monthly income of the respondent was ₦50,955.56. Empowerment scheme help the rural youth in the study area to improve their business strategies (2.60), pursued another career (2.57) to boost their employability, acquired additional skill (mean score = 2.54), and learn new innovation (mean score = 2.04). Moreover, the empowerment scheme helped the rural youth to improve on their savings (mean score = 2.80), improve the standard of living of the rural youth (mean score = 2.36), helped them to embark on family projects (mean score = 2.17), eat three times daily (mean score = 2.04), and improved the health status of the rural youth in the study area. The constraint faced by the rural youth who benefited from the scheme were; difficulties in carrying out their duties as a result of little or no training before deployment (2.39), apathy of some beneficiaries towards the programme (mean score = 2.30), inconsistent of the programme (mean score = 2.08), unpaid stipend to volunteers (mean score = 2.07), delay in payment of the beneficiaries (mean score = 2.02) and inappropriate placement of beneficiaries (mean score = 2.01) were severe constraints the beneficiaries faced during the empowerment scheme. There is significant relationship between the socioeconomics of the respondents and the effects of the empowerment scheme on the wellbeing of the respondents in the study area. The study therefore recommends that more empowerment schemes should be carried out to alleviate poverty among the rural youth and the government should increase the number of beneficiaries to allow more youth benefit from the scheme.

Keywords: N-power, effects, livelihood, challenges, youth

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country endowed with great human and natural resources such as agriculture, petroleum, gas, and large untapped solid mineral resources, World Bank (2018). Nigeria, according to World Bank, 2014), is the most populous country

in African continent and 7th most populous nation in the world. This large population appears to be liability contrasting to asset due to the failure of the government to control and manage the growth of the population through meaningful policies (Abdussalam *et al.*, 2013).



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Unemployment being one of the major developmental issues confronting developing societies appears to be on consistent rise in Nigeria and is seen to prevail among the working population which comprised of a significant proportion of the youth who also constitute more than half of population of the country (Kayode, 2014). Available data indicates that more than half of the Nigerian population is under the ages of 35 years and significant proportion of this population are unemployed while sizeable number of the youth are still under-employed (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Unemployment and disempowerment appear to be related as the two concepts also seem to be related to poverty. Thus, unemployment has posed serious threat to social and economic stability and is seemingly contributing to the high rate of poverty in the country [Department for International Development] (DFID, 2017).

Youth predominantly in the developing countries, are the driving force for economic development. They possess the potentials which if properly harness promotes economic, cultural, social and political values of a society (Usman, 2015). Youths, according to Isiaka, (2015) are a cross-section of the country's population with abundant energy that needs proper channeling and harnessing for increase productivity. A youth in Nigeria may be described as being energetic, full of life, vigor, stamina, vitality and endowed with drive and fearless. These potentials and resourcefulness if not directed towards productive ventures could be used negatively to disrupt social, economic and political structures (Nmodu, 2014). Thus, the initiation of youth empowerment scheme which was targeted to alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment.

Youth empowerment is an initiative with a view to re-engineering their potentials and energies for peace and stability to reduce poverty, un-employment and criminality. Self-employment according to Chikamnayo (2013), is being driven to the zenith by training and equipping youths with both financial support and the asset base to enhance the growth of their businesses. This is an approach to stop all sort of marginalisation and negligence against the youths and to give them equal opportunity and access to education, financial control, political participation, leadership etc regardless of gender or educational level. Economic empowerment enables the youths to take critical decision on how to fix their life long experience and self-development by it. The youths form the pivot agents and occupy core centre of the politico-economy of a nation. Youth in Nigeria may be described as being energetic, full of life, vigor, stamina, vitality and endowed with drive and fearless. These potentials and resourcefulness if not directed towards productive ventures could be used negatively to disrupt social, economic and political structures (Nmodu, 2014).

In view of this, the federal government established empowerment scheme such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which was established in September 2000 and aimed at reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy etc by 2015; The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) which was introduced as a youth empowerment strategy in collaboration with Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) to provide window for building skills and enhancing employability (Anuforo, 2013). You Win Programme, The National Directorate of Employment (NDE). More so, the Administration of President Muhammadu Buhari designed and implemented the on-



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going National Social Investment Scheme (NSIP) as strategy for combating poverty and unemployment. The NSIP scheme was created to enable citizens exit from the twin evils of poverty and unemployment through capacity building, investment and direct financial support. The programme consists of four major components which include the Job Creation and Youth Empowerment (N- Power), National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) and Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP). NSIP generally aimed at increasing the poor and vulnerable youth with access income/livelihood by providing access to targeted funds, thereby improving youth ability to absorb economic shock. The N-Power scheme specifically is the employability and enhancement programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria, aimed at imbibing the learn- work enterprise culture in youth between the ages 18-34 [National Social Investment Programme](N-SIP 2018).

Empowerment in a nutshell is about creation/provision of condition conducive to enhance through motivation the performance of a person (Nyale, 2018). It is geared toward developing person's sense of self determination and enhancing his/her belief in self-efficiency. Thus, youths empowerment through participation in entrepreneurial activities will not only create carrier opportunities for the teaming youths, but reduce insecurity and other related social violence that are associated with unemployment in the country.

The misery and frustration of the citizenry foisted a state of hopelessness and the majority of the youths have resorted to any means including crime to succeed in life. Many researches have been carried out on the impact of empowerment scheme in reducing unemployment level and poverty

rate but little or none have been done on the effects of the empowerment scheme on the livelihoods of the rural household in the study area. The study therefore, is prepared to examine the effects of government empowerment scheme (N-Power) on the livelihood of rural youth in Ekiti state.

The main objective of this study was to assess the effect of federal government empowerment scheme (N-Power) on the livelihood of rural youth in the Ekiti State. Specifically, the study is designed to: describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, identify the various categories of N-Power programmes that the youth benefited, determine the effects of N - Power scheme on skill enhancement, determine the effects of N-Power scheme on the wellbeing of the youth and identify the problems faced by the beneficiaries of N-power scheme in the study area.

1.5 Hypothesis

H₀₁: there is no significant relationship between the socioeconomics characteristics of the respondents and the effects of N-power scheme on their wellbeing in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Ekiti state. Ekiti state was created out of the old Ondo in 1996 with its capital in Ado Ekiti in the south west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Ekiti State is made up of sixteen (16) Local Government Areas and Ado-Ekiti is the state capital as well as the headquarters of Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area. Ekiti State is among the six south western states of Nigeria with a land area of 6,353 Km². The National Population Commission (NPC, 2006) recorded the population of Ekiti State to be 2,384,212 people and the projected population for Ekiti State as at 2016 was 3,270,798 people.



The state lies between $7^{\circ} 15'$ and $8^{\circ} 7'$ North of the equator and longitude $4^{\circ} 47'$ and $5^{\circ} 45'$ East of the Greenwich Meridian. The climate of the state is highly favourable for the agrarian activities of its teeming population who grow crops such as cocoa, oil palm and arable crops like maize and cassava. The state have a mean annual rainfall of about 1400mm and a mean maximum temperature was 29.5°C . The climate is of south-western Nigeria lowland tropical rain forest type with distinct wet and dry seasons. The raining season commences in April and ends in October, while the dry season starts around November till March.

The landscape is characterized by igneous and metamorphic rocks which are widely scattered across the state. The state has a fertile land that is very suitable for agricultural activities. The good climatic conditions and the fertility of land favour the cultivation of varieties of crops. The state is divided into two agro-ecological zones (northern savannah and southern forest zones) for the purpose of agricultural planning.

Population of the study

The population of this study comprised the rural youth who benefited from N-Power in Ekiti State.

Sampling technique

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed in this study. In the first stage, three (3) local government areas were randomly selected from the 16 local governments in Ekiti State. The second stage involved the random selection of three (3) communities from each local government selected, while the third stage involved purposive selection of ten (10) youths who benefited from N-power scheme in the study area (from the list of N-power beneficiary which was requested

from the office in-charge/ state coordinator). Thus a total of 90 respondents were sampled for this study.

3.5 Analytical techniques

Descriptive statistic such as frequency counts, means, percentages, and standard variation was used to describe the socioeconomic characteristics; identify the various programmes benefited by the beneficiaries and identify the problems faced by the beneficiaries in the study area. Meanwhile, Likert type scale was used to determine the effect of the empowerment scheme on the skills and wellbeing of the respondent and the various constraints the beneficiaries faced during the empowerment scheme. While inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis.

Pearson Product Moment correlation

Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) was used to determine the relationship between the socioeconomics characteristics of the respondents and the effects of Npower scheme on their wellbeing in the study area. PPMC is mathematically represented as follow

$$r = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{X})(y - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{[\sum (x - \bar{X})^2][\sum (y - \bar{Y})^2]}}$$

Where:

r = correlation coefficient

x= values of the x-variable in a sample

X = mean of the values of the x-variable

y = values of the y-variable in a sample

Y = mean of the values of the Y-variable

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Characteristics

The result on Table1 shows the distribution of the respondents based on their socio economics characteristics. From the results, it was revealed that the mean age of the respondents was 29 years. Majority



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(74.44%) of the respondents are within 25-30 years. This confirms that the programme was centered on youth development and empowerment. Meanwhile, the result also reveals that 57.78 percent of the respondents are male while 42.22 percent of the respondents are female. More than half, (58.89%) of the respondents are Christians while (36.67%) and (4.44%) of the respondents practice Islam and traditional religion respectively. This implies that the three major religions in the Nigeria were represented in the study area. The result also revealed that majority (87.78%) of the respondents had tertiary education, while 12.22 percent of them had secondary education. This finding reveals that the beneficiaries of the programme are

majorly directed to graduate of various categories. More so, more than half of the respondents (62.22%) are married while (37.78%) of the respondents single. The mean household size of the respondents was four (4) persons. This reveals that the respondents were young with low household size. The study also revealed from the table that the primary occupation of the respondents is trading (43.33%), artisan (34.44%) and farming (12.22%). The mean monthly income of the respondent was ₦50,955.56. More than half (64.44%) of the respondents' monthly income is more than ₦30,000.00. This implies that the respondents earn more than the allowance they received from government monthly.

Table 1 Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondent

Variables	Frequency	%	Mean
Age (Years)			
<25	9	10.00	29 years
25-30	67	74.44	
> 30	24	26.67	
Sex			
Male	52	57.78	
Female	38	42.22	
Religion			
Christian	53	58.89	
Islam	33	36.67	
Traditional religion	4	4.44	
Education status			
Secondary education	11	12.22	
Tertiary education	79	87.78	
Marital status			
Single	34	37.78	
Married	56	62.22	
Household size			
≤ 5	78	86.67	3.7 persons
> 5	12	13.33	
Primary occupation			
Farming	11	12.22	
Trading	48	53.33	
Artisan	31	34.44	
Monthly income			
≤ 30,000	32	35.56	
> 30,000	58	64.44	₦50,955.56

Source: Field survey, 2024



N-power Programme Benefited in the Study Area

The findings on Figure 1 reveals the distribution of respondents based on the N-power programme they benefited in the study area, from the findings, it was established that 32.22% of the respondents benefited from N-Teach, 40.00% of the respondents benefited from N-Agro while 11.11% of the respondents indicated that they benefited from N-Health programme.

Meanwhile, 16.67% of the respondents also indicated that they benefited from N-Tax programme. But none of the respondents indicated that they benefited from N-Build, N-Tech software, N-Tech hardware and N-Creative respectively. These findings reveals that the major empowerment programmes benefited by the youth in the study area were N-Teach, N-Agro, N-Health and N-Tax.

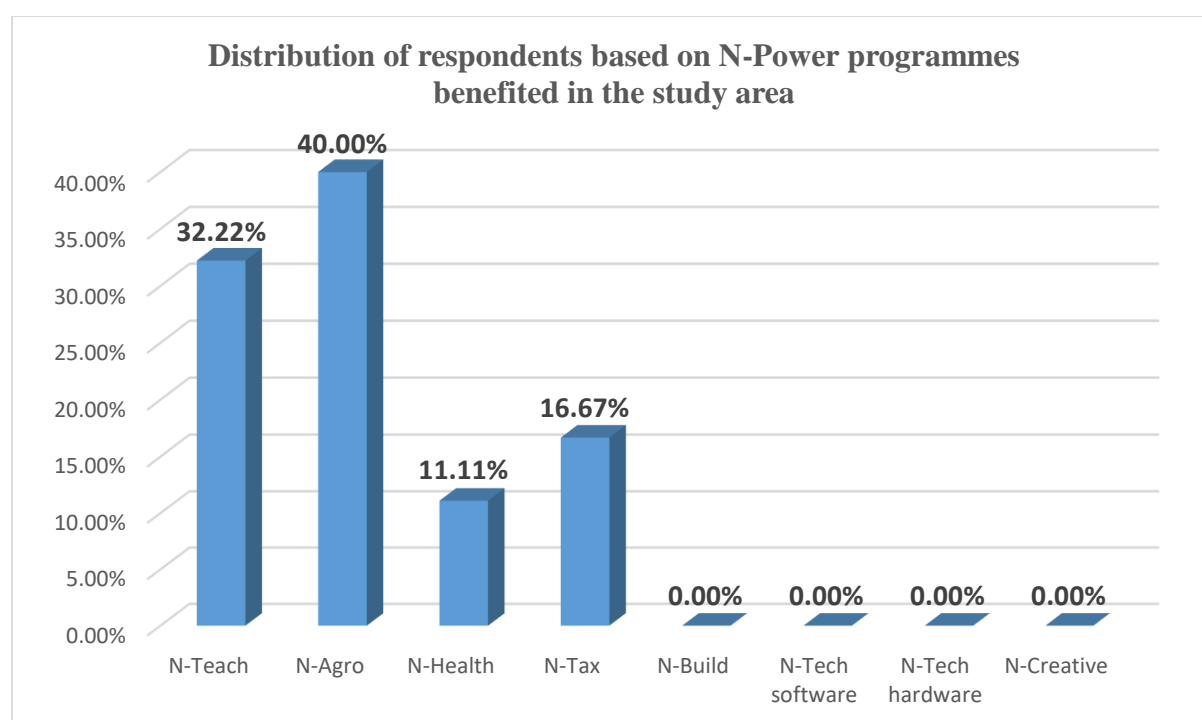


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents based on N-power programme benefited

Effect of the empowerment scheme on the skills of the rural youth

The findings on the Table 2 show the effects of empowerment scheme on the skills acquisition of the rural youth in the study area. From the findings, the youths agreed that empowerment scheme help the rural youth to improve their business strategies with a mean of 2.60 ranking 1st. The scheme also helps the rural youth to pursue another career with a mean of 2.57 ranking 2nd. Meanwhile, the youth in the

rural area agreed that empowerment scheme helped them to acquire additional skill with a mean of 2.54 ranking 3rd. The implication is that it is expected to help them diversify their livelihood. Moreover, the scheme also significantly helps the youth in the study area to learn new innovation with a mean of 2.04 ranking 4th. This findings reveals that the empowerment scheme have a significant effects on the skill acquisition of the rural youth in the study area.



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Table 2 Effect of the empowerment scheme on the skill of the rural youth

Variable	Total	Mean	Rank
N-power help me to improve on my business strategies	233	2.60	1st
N-power help me to pursue another career	231	2.57	2nd
N-power help me to acquire additional skill	229	2.54	3rd
During N-power, I was able to learn new innovation	184	2.04	4th
Through N-power, I bought my technical equipment	174	1.93	5th

Source: field survey, 2024 (Multiple response is allowed)

The effects of N-Power scheme on the wellbeing of the youth

The finding on Table 3 reveals the effects of empowerment scheme on the wellbeing of the rural youth. The findings indicates that empowerment scheme help the rural youth to improve on their savings (mean score = 2.80) ranked 1st. The study also reveals that the scheme improve the standard of living of the rural youths with the mean score of 2.36 ranking 2nd. Also,

the youths agreed they were able to embark on family projects (mean score = 2.17) ranking 3rd, eating three times daily (mean score = 2.04) ranking 4th. Lastly, the findings revealed that the empowerment scheme improved the health status of the rural youths with the mean score of 2.02 ranking 5th. These findings implies that empowerment scheme have a positive effect on the wellbeing of the rural youth in the study area.

Table 3: The effects of N-Power scheme on the wellbeing of the youth

Variable	Total	Mean	Rank
During the N-power scheme, I have savings	253	2.80	1st
N-power improve my standard of living	212	2.36	2 nd
Through N-power, I was able to embark on family project	195	2.17	3 rd
Through N-power, I was able to eat three times a day	184	2.04	4 th
N-power improve my health status	182	2.02	5 th

Source: Field survey, 2024

Constraints faced by the beneficiaries of N-Power scheme

The findings on Table 4 shows the major constraints the beneficiaries of empowerment scheme faced in the study area. A 3 points Likert type scale was used to determine the constraints. The variable with mean less than the bench mark of 1 is considered minor constraints while variable

with mean above bench mark of 1 is considered a major constraint. The finding reveals that the rural youth who benefited from the scheme have difficulties in carrying out their duties as a result of little or no training before deployment with a mean of 2.39 ranked 1st. Also, apathy towards the programme with a mean of 2.30 ranked 2nd, inconsistent of the programme



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with a mean of 2.08 ranking 3rd, unpaid stipend to volunteers with a mean of 2.07 ranked 4th, delay in payment of the beneficiaries with a mean of 2.02 ranked 5th

while allowance could not pay my bills with a mean of 1.72 ranked 8th as the least constraints the beneficiaries faced during the empowerment scheme.

Table 4. Constraints faced by the beneficiaries

Constraints	Total	Mean	Rank	Decision
Difficult in dispensing duties as a result of little or no training before deployment	215	2.39	1st	Major constraint
Apathy towards the programme	207	2.30	2 nd	Major constraint
Inconsistent of the programme	188	2.08	3 rd	Major constraint
Unpaid stipend to volunteers.	187	2.07	4 th	Major constraint
Delay in payment of the beneficiaries	182	2.02	5 th	Major constraint
Inappropriate placement of beneficiaries	181	2.01	6 th	Major constraint
Over centralization of the programme	157	1.74	7 th	Major constraint
The allowance could not pay my bills	155	1.72	8 th	Major constraint

Mean less than 1=minor constraint, mean above 1= major constraint

Source: Field survey, 2024

Hypothesis of the Study

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) in Table 5 below reveals the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and the effects of empowerment scheme on their wellbeing in the study area. 4 variables were statistically significant which are; age, sex, household size, income. From the results, age of the respondents was positively significant at $p = 0.05$ level of significance. This implies that the older the respondents, the more ability they have to manage their resources. More so, sex of the respondents was also significant at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. And household size of the respondents also had a negative coefficient

at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. This implies that the higher the household size the higher the family budget and the less satisfaction the family members derive from the available resources. Meanwhile, the income of the respondents have a positive significant relationship with the effects of empowerment scheme on the well-being of the rural youth at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. This implies that the higher the income of the farmer, the better their well-being. From the PPMC result, it is obvious that socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents determine the effects of the empowerment scheme on the well-being of the respondents in the study area; hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5: Results of PPMC Showing the Relationship between the Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents and the Effect of the Empowerment Scheme on their Wellbeing

Variables	R	p-value	Decision
Age	0.207**	0.050	Significant
Sex	0.428*	0.000	Significant
Marital status	0.385	0.078	Not significant
Household size	-0.680*	0.000	Significant
Pry occupation	0.269	0.067	Not significant
Average income	0.371**	0.024	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2024



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Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was therefore concluded that Majority of the beneficiary earn more than minimum wage. The empowerment scheme influences skill acquisition among rural youth in the study area and have significant effect on the wellbeing of the respondents in the study area, meanwhile, the respondents have difficulties in carrying out their duties as a result of little or no

training before deployment. The study thus recommend that regular training should be organized by government and non-governmental agencies before deployment of the beneficiaries into their place of primary assignment, more empowerment schemes should be carried out to alleviate poverty among the rural youth. Lastly, the government should be consistent in the running of the programme as it is a means of livelihood for the rural youth.

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