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## Impact of N-Power Social Empowerment Programme on Youth Employment in Cross River State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The N-Power programme is one of the social empowerment programmes of President Muhammadu Buhari, to empower Nigerian youths for prosperity. The programme was launched on the 8th of June, 2016, to tackle issues of youth joblessness and improve the social development of young people in Nigeria. N-Power addresses the challenge 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. With the increasing level of unemployment in Nigeria, the attention of scholars and indeed the general public is drawn to evaluate the impact of the programme after 7 years of implementation. This study aims to evaluate the significant impact of the N-Power social employment programme on youth employment in Cross River State. This is an empirical study. Data are obtained from a cross population of unemployed youths in the state. The chi-square statistical technique is used in testing the hypotheses stated to guide the study. The findings show that the programme has been significant in supporting skill development and youth employment, but not complemented with the needed infrastructure that supports business development. It recommends among other things, the need for the government to create an enabling environment for empowered people and donor agencies to operate.*

**Keywords:** Social Empowerment Programme, Youth Employment, N-Power Scheme, Entrepreneurship.

### Introduction

There is an increasing level of unemployment in Africa and Nigeria in particular. The problem is exacerbated by the youth population. According to Donna and Alexandra (2013), “The youth population in sub-Saharan Africa is increasing rapidly. Nearly one in three people living in the region, or about 297 million, is between the ages of 10 and 24. By 2050, that age group is projected to nearly double to about 561 million”. According to Audrey (2024), “Africa has the world’s youngest population, with a median age of 19.7 years. Such a large youthful population might ordinarily symbolize an ample and energetic workforce, a boon for the development prospects of any region” “ He added that, “the dire employment situation for young people across Africa continues to snuff out their potential” (Audrey, 2024). “One-third of Africa’s then 420 million young people between 15 and 35 years old were unemployed, another third were vulnerably employed, and only 1 in 6 was in wage employment” (African Development Bank, 2015).

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In 2016, the African Development Bank reported that “while 10 million to 12 million youth enter the workforce in Africa each year, only 3 million formal jobs are created annually. African youth have no choice but to work because most countries on the continent have little or no social protection”. The report projected that, “Africa’s youth population is rapidly growing and expected to double to over 830 million by 2050. If properly harnessed, this increase in the working-age population could support increased productivity and stronger, more inclusive economic growth across the continent”. The report adds that “the majority of youth in Africa do not have stable economic opportunities. Of Africa’s nearly 420 million youth aged 15-35, one-third are unemployed and discouraged, another third are vulnerably employed, and only one in six is in wage employment. Youth face roughly double the unemployment rate of adults, with significant variation by country. The problem is not just unemployment but underemployment, which peaks at just over half of youth in the labor force in low-income countries”.

The unemployment gap is getting widened and this leaves a lot of research and policy concerns for the future. It worsens with more educated youth populations, formal and informal education with no corresponding absorption possibilities. In sub-Saharan Africa, African Economic Outlook (2012) draws attention to “estimates proportion of 20-to-24-year-olds who complete secondary education”, without direct or indirect employment opportunities. They blamed this on the economic policies of the environment. They admitted that the number “will increase from 42 percent to 59 percent over the next 20 years” (African Economic Outlook, 2012). The policy suggests, “As sub-Saharan Africa’s workforce becomes larger and better educated, there is an overwhelming potential for economic growth and development. Countries must take the opportunity to cultivate the capacity of their youth, a valuable resource for their prosperity”.

Nigeria has experienced its share of unemployment. In Nigeria, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force. “Unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 5 percent in the third quarter of 2023 from 4.20 percent in the second quarter of 2023. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria is expected to be 5.30 percent by the end of this quarter”, according to Trading Economics global macro models and analysts expectations (2023). Unemployment in Nigeria is a persistent and significant challenge, exacerbated by the country's rapidly growing youthful population. This demographic trend presents both an opportunity and a risk: a potential demographic dividend that could boost economic growth, or a liability leading to increased poverty, social unrest, and brain drain.

In Cross River State, the youth unemployment rate was 53.65% in 2020 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), one of the highest in the country. The consequences of youth unemployment on the economy are far-reaching. Youth unemployment remains a barrier to economic development. This large unemployed population indicates lost potential since communities and nations fail to benefit from what the young people could theoretically contribute. Difficulties finding and sustaining employment detract from a young person’s lifetime productivity and earnings, making it more challenging to escape poverty.

There are several reasons for youth unemployment in Nigeria. According to the African Economic Outlook (2013), “One of the reasons young people are having trouble finding employment is a limited number of jobs. Between 2000 and 2008, only about a third of the 74 million jobs created in Africa were for people ages 15 to 24”. The policy report admits that, “this challenge causes young people to settle for less-than-ideal employment, such as jobs that are low-paying, temporary, or unsafe, or ones for which they are overqualified. Some enter the informal economy to make ends meet. Others stop looking for jobs altogether. These groups are

difficult to measure and are not included in typical unemployment figures” (African Economic Outlook, 2013). The number of available jobs for young people further contributes to the unemployment situation in Nigeria. “While improving, educational systems are still failing to provide a large proportion of youth with the skills they need to secure a living. Without the ability to attain basic skills or the specific ones that match the demands of the labor market, many youth are unable to find employment” (African Economic Outlook, 2013).

One of the ways to curb unemployment in society is through the design and implementation of social development policies. The N-Power programme in Nigeria was one such social policy initiative. According to Zainab, Abubakar, Kalli, Yusuf, Hadiza, and Bukar (2024), the “N-Power is a scheme operating under the National Social Investments Programme of the Nigerian Federal Government. Its primary objectives encompass job creation for graduates, poverty alleviation, and empowerment initiatives achieved through volunteer services”. The policy was designed to tackle youth unemployment by equipping young people with skills for community development and participation in local and global markets. Targeting youths aged 18-35, regardless of their educational background, the programme offers skill acquisition, employability, entrepreneurship training, and job placements. Participants receive a stipend of ₦30,000 for graduates and ₦10,000 for non-graduates during the typically two-year programme. As a key initiative of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, the N-Power programme is part of the broader National Social Investment programme (NSIP), aimed at addressing poverty, hunger, and poor human development indices. It includes five categories:

1. N-Teach: Deploys graduates to teach in schools.
2. N-Health: Places graduates in healthcare facilities.
3. N-Agro: Enhances agricultural productivity.
4. N-Build: Provides vocational training for non-graduates.
5. N-Creative: Develop creative and technological skills.

N-Power seeks to reduce youth unemployment through skill acquisition and employment opportunities, improve social development by fostering civic responsibility, and enhance public service delivery in education, healthcare, and agriculture. By empowering skilled workers and entrepreneurs, it aims to stimulate economic growth. Until its suspension in 2023, it is reported that over 1 million Nigerian youths have benefited from the programme. This study will explore the programme's impact and effectiveness in addressing youth unemployment in Cross River State. The study focuses on the N-Health and N-Build components of the programme in the Calabar Municipal Council area of Cross River State.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite operating for seven years, the true impact of the N-Power programme on youth employment, particularly in Cross River State, remains unclear. Although designed as a job creation scheme, it is uncertain how many sustainable jobs it has generated beyond temporary roles. The programme's effectiveness depends on whether it equips participants with lasting skills or merely provides short-term relief. While N-Power aims to improve employability by addressing skill gaps, concerns persist regarding its long-term solutions for youth unemployment. An "exit model" involving training and startup loans was announced in 2022, but its ability to reduce unemployment remains untested. This study aims to evaluate the N-Power programme's impact in Cross River State by examining:

1. Changes in youth employment rates among participants.
2. The quality and extent of skill development.
3. The sustainability of new opportunities across sectors.
4. Indirect effects on public service delivery and the local economy.

Cross River State's diverse socio-economic environment offers a valuable context for this assessment. By providing insights into the programme successes and areas for improvement, this research will inform future policy decisions and contribute to strategies for youth empowerment and unemployment reduction in Nigeria. The study focuses on the N-Health and N-Build components of the programme in the Calabar Municipal Council area of Cross River State.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of the N-Power programme on youth unemployment in Cross River State. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the impact of the N-Health programme on youth empowerment in Cross River State.
2. Assess the impact of the N-Agro programme on youth empowerment in Cross River State.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions were raised to guide the study,

1. How has the N-Health programme contributed to youth empowerment in Cross River State?
2. How has the N-Agro programme contributed to youth empowerment in Cross River State?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Social Empowerment**

Social empowerment, often defined as the process through which individuals gain control over their own lives and influence their communities, is a critical factor in promoting equitable societies. According to Cattaneo and Chapman (2010), empowerment involves the acquisition of autonomy and power, and it is closely tied to improved self-efficacy, competence, and the achievement of personally meaningful goals. Freina et al. (2015) extend this definition to emphasize the importance of social empowerment in enhancing individuals' ability to engage with and impact social structures. These scholars identify that social empowerment operates on multiple levels—individual, group, and community—and that changes at one level can precipitate changes at the others (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010); (Freina et al., 2015). Lord and Hutchison (1993) further elaborate on this by suggesting that empowerment not only increases competence but also fosters the ability to influence social, economic, and political systems.

Empowerment is especially pertinent when addressing youth unemployment, as the absence of stable employment undermines autonomy and increases vulnerability. Cavalieri and Almeida (2018) note that empowerment involves the ability to influence decisions that directly affect one's life, making it essential for youth facing job insecurity. Youth unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, can diminish self-esteem and increase susceptibility to negative outcomes such as crime, substance abuse, and social exclusion. Empowerment programmes,

therefore, play a vital role in reducing these risks by providing the necessary skills and support to enhance employability (Martínez-Roca et al., 2015).

## **Youth Unemployment**

According to the United Nations (2010), youths are those between the ages of 15 and 24. This definition considers those under the age of 14 as children. However, under the Rights of the Child, persons up to the age of 18 are defined as children. The broader use of the term underscores the need for policies and programmes to focus less on age and more on recognizing the specific development needs of people as they transition from childhood to adulthood (UN, 2010; Abada & Omeh, 2019).

Youth unemployment is a critical issue worldwide, particularly in developing nations where poverty and a lack of educational and employment opportunities persist. Unemployment among young people has long-term detrimental effects, including lower future wages, higher chances of recurrent unemployment, and an increased risk of poverty in adulthood. According to evidence from Accord (2020), addressing youth unemployment is not only essential for individual well-being but also for broader social and economic development. Programmes that provide young people with income-generating opportunities can help reduce poverty, promote social cohesion, and improve economic productivity.

The National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action define youth as persons between the ages of 18 and 35 who are citizens of Nigeria. This implies that youth can be regarded as any person in the stage of transition to adulthood who depends on others for means of survival, shelter, and other necessities of life. Youths are seen as "the foundation of a society; their energies, character, inventiveness, and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. They are the most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of socio-economic, emotional, and other aspects" (Zakaria, 2006, cited in Abada & Omeh, 2019: 708). On the other hand, youth empowerment is conceived as a "mean or way of enhancing the life condition of the powerless or less privileged ones (particularly the youths) in the state (Abdussalam, 2015:36). The World Bank (2002:14) defined empowerment as "the expansion of the assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives". Similarly, youth empowerment has been defined by Okwudili and Emmanuel (2014:28) as "the process whereby young people gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of others". Therefore, the main purpose of youth empowerment is to encourage youths to acquire entrepreneurial skills and knowledge to become independent. This is usually done by providing youth with training facilities and funding (Abada & Omeh, 2019).

Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their behalf and their terms, rather than at the directions of others. The enabling conditions, according to Aderonmu (2017), cited in Akujuru & Enyioko (2019: 34), fall into four broad categories: "an economic and social base; political will; adequate resource allocation; supportive legal and administrative frameworks; a stable environment of equality, peace, and democracy; access to knowledge, information, and skills; and a positive value system". Numerous countries have implemented youth empowerment and unemployment reduction programmes. For example, "India's National Skill Development Mission and Kenya's Youth Empowerment Project emphasize education and vocational training as strategies for

increasing youth employability. South Africa's Expanded Public Works programme focuses on providing job opportunities to alleviate poverty" (Akujuru & Enyioko, 2019), with particular attention to youth employment.

Analysis of youth unemployment by geographical/settlement location (rural and urban areas) indicates that youth unemployment is mostly in rural areas and rapidly growing: From 2011 to 2017, the share of unemployed youth in rural areas increased from 47.59 percent to 59.95 percent. The population of unemployed youth in rural areas rose from 2.9 million in 2010 to about 5.9 million in 2016. Public policies directed at addressing youth unemployment have faced different challenges including finance, the absence of good administration and implementation, inconsistent policies, unimpressive responses from would-be trainees, and unqualified resource personnel handling the training programmes.

Nigeria faces several challenges that can only be met if she has innovative, well-educated, and willing-to-be-trained citizens who, whatever their walks of life, have the spirit and inquisitiveness to think in new ways, and the courage to meet and adapt to the challenges facing them. At the same time, given the current socio-economic and political stance of the country, a thriving economy would require a greater number of young people who are willing and able to be trained; who can launch and successfully develop their own commercial or social ventures, and who will become innovators in the wider organizations in which they work. It is a common experience that many graduates from Nigerian universities find it difficult to get employment every year. This is partly due to the curricula of the universities and other tertiary institutions which emphasize training for white-collar jobs (Osibanjo, 2006).

The socioeconomic situation in Nigeria poses serious threats and challenges to both government and the well-being of citizens of the nation as a whole. The unemployment problems further call for different strategies and actions for it to be ameliorated. The N-Power programme has been embraced by almost all the Nigerian youths and its capabilities and efficacy in springing up economies are not in doubt. It is believed that refocusing the N-Power programme will immensely contribute to developing the spirit and culture of empowerment in the country. N-Power programme is essential not only to shape the mindsets of young people but also to provide the skills and knowledge that are central to developing an empowerment culture. The N-Power programme provides unemployed youths with the motivation, knowledge, and skills essential for launching a successful venture company (Cho, 2017).

Developing mindsets, generic attributes, and skills that are the foundations of N-Power can be achieved through indoctrination from an early stage; that is, if it is incorporated into the national system with the seriousness it deserves. Because employment is key to shaping young people's attitudes, skills and culture, it is vital that N-Power programme is addressed from an early stage and up to the level of sustainability. N-Power programme should be available to all unemployed regardless of major courses and choice of studies to enhance competitive advantage, not only for students but the societies and nations where they are involved. The relationship between empowerment and development has been established, such that empowerment is now internationally accepted as a key development index. The importance of empowerment cannot be overemphasized; it is a fundamental human right, hence, the need for incorporating the N-Power programme in the unemployment alleviated system.

**N-Power**

Historically, Nigeria has ever been lagging in enacting social empowerment programmes that have been targeted at the youthful population as the employment rates among this population have been a constant source of worry and concern. The government, through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), initiated and supported various programmes to empower youth and diversify the economy, including the establishment of Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs), the launch of the Microfinance Policy, Regulatory and Supervisory Framework, and the introduction of initiatives like the NYSC sensitization, Venture Prize Competition, and NYSC Entrepreneurship Training programmes. Additionally, programmes such as YouWIN!, Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria (YISA), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Africa Youth Empowerment Nigeria (AYEN), Youth Entrepreneur Support Programme (YES-P), and N-Power Empowerment programme were also implemented. The success of these programmes in Nigeria has been mixed, with some achieving notable progress while others face challenges. Initiatives like the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN!) and the N-Power Empowerment programme have received praise for creating job opportunities and empowering thousands of youth, contributing to poverty reduction and skill development. YouWIN! has supported numerous startups, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation, while N-Power has provided critical skills and temporary employment to graduates across various sectors. However, these programmes have faced significant challenges, including inadequate funding, inconsistent policy implementation, and corruption. As a result, while some progress has been made, many of these initiatives have not achieved their full potential.

The N-Power programme was implemented as part of the National Social Investment programme (NSIP) in 2016 to tackle hunger and poverty in Nigeria. While there was a suite of programmes including The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme directly supports those within the lowest poverty bracket, the Government Enterprise and Empowerment programme (GEEP) – a micro-lending intervention targeted at traders, artisans, enterprising youth, farmers, and women, The Home Grown School Feeding programme (HGSF) aimed at delivering school feeding to young children with a specific focus on increasing school enrolment and of course, the N-power programme designed to assist young Nigerians between the ages of 18 to 35 to acquire and develop life-long skills for becoming change-makers in their communities and players in the domestic and global markets and given a stipend of N30,000 monthly (National Social Investment programme – the Statehouse, Abuja, n.d.).

The N-Power is aimed at addressing the challenges of unemployment, especially among graduate youths, as it is categorized into the Graduate Teachers Corps, which is targeted at 500,000 graduates. N-Power Knowledge is targeting 25,000 non-graduates, while N-Power Build targets 75,000 non-graduates in recruitment. Through N-Power, young Nigerian youths will be empowered with the necessary tools to go and create, develop, build, fix, and work on exceptional ideas, projects, and enterprises that will change communities, the economy, and the nation (Abada & Omeh, 2019:709). The objectives of N-Power are:

1. To reduce the rate of unemployment in the country.
2. To intervene and directly improve the livelihood of a critical mass of young, unemployed Nigerians.

3. To develop a qualitative system for the transfer of employability, entrepreneurial, and technical skills.
4. To create an ecosystem of solutions for ailing public services and government diversification policies.
5. To develop and enhance Nigeria's knowledge economy to bring solutions to poorly implemented public service and government diversification policies (Iloh & Olewé, 2018: 8; Odey & Sambe, 2019: 4; Abada & Omeh, 2019: 709).

The N-Power programme is divided into the following categories: a. Graduate Category, which is comprised of N-Power Volunteer Corps b. Non-Graduate Category, comprising N-Power Knowledge and N-Power Build (Odey & Sambe, 2019:4) According to the N-Power Information Guide (2017), volunteers are expected to provide teaching, instructional, and advisory solutions in four (4) key areas, such as the N-Power Agro programme, the N-Power Health programme, the N-Power Teach programme, and the Voluntary Asset and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS) (Odey & Sambe, 2019:4; Abada & Omeh, 2019:10). However, in 2017, other non-graduate strands of the N-Power programme were introduced. Hence, Abada & Omeh (2019) stated that the participants of the N-Power programme are to provide teaching, instructional, and advisory solutions in the following areas below: N-Power Agro programme, N-Power Health programme, N-Power Teach programme, (d) N-Power Tax programme, N-Power Community Education programme, N-Power Knowledge programmes, N-Power Creative programme, N-Power Tech Hardware, N-Power Tech Software, and N-Power Build programme (Abada & Omeh, 2019:10).

Research on N-Power has produced mixed results. Studies in different regions of Nigeria have found that the programme has had some positive effects on participants' standard of living and employability, but these benefits are often temporary. For instance, in Kano State, Aminu (2019) reported that N-Power improved the standard of living for business education graduates, although participants found the stipends insufficient for long-term stability. In Edo State, Owenvbiugie and Egbri (2020) found that N-Power effectively engaged and empowered youths, yet they emphasized the need for better alignment between training and market demands. Similarly, a study by Charles and Ifedayo (2024) in the South-West Zone of Nigeria identified significant design flaws, such as poor beneficiary targeting and participation that have hindered the programme's effectiveness.

Much of the existing research on N-Power has focused on its nationwide impact or other regions, leaving a significant gap in understanding its effects in Cross River State. There is little to no research on N-Power's specific impact on youth unemployment in this region, particularly concerning the quality and extent of skill development achieved and the sustainability of the programme. Additionally, there is a lack of insight into whether participants in Cross River State continue to benefit from the programme after leaving it, making this an essential area for further investigation. The distribution of N-Power beneficiaries by category of programme benefited in Cross River is shown in Table 1 below.

S/N	Factors	Frequency	Percentages
1	N-Tech	112	67.1
2	N-Agro	16	9.6
3	N-Health	27	16.2



4	N-Power (Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS))	12	7.2
	Total	167	100

**Table 1: N-Power Beneficiaries by Category of Programme Benefited in Cross River**

Source: Odey & Sambe (2019)

This study therefore aims to address these critical gaps in the existing literature. By examining the impact of the N-Power programme on youth employment in Cross River State, it will provide much-needed empirical evidence on the programme's effectiveness in developing job-ready skills and facilitating sustainable employment outcomes for participants in this specific regional context. The research will also explore the longer-term impacts on participants' career trajectories and income levels after exiting the programme, offering valuable insights into the programme's ability to catalyse meaningful socioeconomic change. The findings from this study will contribute to strengthening the evidence base on the N-Power initiative, informing policymakers and programme administrators on how to optimize the design and implementation of programmes with similar objectives to better meet the needs of youth in Cross River State. This is particularly crucial given the state's high youth unemployment rates and the imperative to develop effective interventions that can boost employment prospects and economic opportunities for this demographic. By shedding light on the unique challenges and successes of the N-Power programme in Cross River, this research will provide practical recommendations to enhance the programme's impact and sustainability, ultimately supporting the broader goal of reducing youth unemployment and fostering inclusive economic development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts an Empowerment theory. This theory is more appropriate for this study. The empowerment theory was propounded by Solomon (1976) in his book titled *Black Empowerment*. According to his postulation, personal, interpersonal, and environmental resources are needed to update the skills, knowledge, and motivation of people to achieve valid social roles. He further maintains that powerlessness and a feeling of hopelessness are a result of the inability to use resources and support to achieve empowerment. The theory provides an effective support system for individuals and communities that have been blocked from achieving collective goals and overcoming social barriers and self-fulfillment within existing social structures (Okala and Uche, 2014; Abada & Omeh, 2019).

The initiation of multifarious social schemes in Nigeria by different political regimes has become a source of empowerment for the citizens, especially the vulnerable youths who are jobless and roaming the streets. Social schemes and packages like the Graduate Internship Scheme, N-Power, and conditional transfers of money to the youth have become successful and empowered. The beneficiaries are bent on using the acquired knowledge to develop themselves and the entire society. The implication is the involvement of youths in the decision-making process and their contribution economically to the growth of the economy (Abada & Omeh, 2019).

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study will employ the Survey research design which is quantitative. The survey design makes use of a research questionnaire as an instrument for primary data collection.

### Area of Study

The study is conducted in Calabar Municipal Local Government area of Cross River State. The headquarters of Calabar Municipal is in the city of Calabar. “It has an area of 142 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 179,392 at the 2006 census (Achum, 2017). Administratively, the city is divided into Calabar Municipal and Calabar South Local Government Areas”. also, “It has an area of 406 square kilometres (157 sq mi) and, as of the 2006 census, a population of 371,022” (Simon, 2010). He added that, “both LGAs together had an estimated population of 571,500 in 2022. Calabar has three principal landlord kingdoms, namely the Qua Kingdom of Ejagham (Ekoi)/Bantu origin, the Efut and the Efik Kingdoms” (Simeon, 2010). Calabar people are mainly people from the old Calabar province – Calabar South, Calabar Municipality, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Biase, Odukpani and Akamkpa, but as commonly used in Nigeria, the term "Calabar people" could also refer to the indigenes of Greater Calabar as well as the people of the original South Eastern State of Nigeria who are at present the people of Akwa Ibom State and Cross River State. They are also predominantly civil servants and farmers.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study is 40. This number was drawn from the total number of beneficiaries in the N-agro and N-health programmes as shown in Table 1. The total number of beneficiaries for these two categories is 43. The beneficiaries of the programmes were reached through a workshop organised to by the state office of the project. This afforded the researchers the opportunity to interact with the beneficiaries, in reviewing the impact of the programme. A research questionnaire was designed as an instrument for data collection. After administering the research instrument, 40 out of 43 questionnaire were retrieved and this was used as the sample size for the study. At the time of the study, most of the beneficiaries were engaged with post-entrepreneurial skilled programmes as a result of the N-Power programme.

### Method of Data Analysis

Chi square statistical tool is used in testing the two hypotheses.

### Test of Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated to guide this investigation. In this section of the report, the data collected on them are subjected to statistical analysis to determine whether they should be accepted or rejected. The test of hypotheses and interpretation is presented on a hypothesis-by-hypothesis basis. Chi square statistical tool is used in testing the two hypotheses.

### Hypothesis 1:

N-Health programme has no significant impact on youth empowerment in Cross River State.

	Responses
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Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total
N-health	6 (7.2)	2 (4.5)	8 (4.5)	2 (1.8)	18
Youth empowerment	10 (8.8)	8 (5.5)	2 (5.5)	2 (2.2)	22

Table 2: Chi-Square (X<sup>2</sup>) Response Distribution On N-Health Programme and Youth Empowerment in Cross River State.

Calculated X<sup>2</sup> -7.48, Table value of Chi -5.99, Level of significance-.05, df- 2

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Response on Table 2 showed that the calculated chi square (X<sup>2</sup>) value is 7.48, while the table value at .05 level of significance is 5.99. Since the calculated value of X<sup>2</sup> is greater than the table value of chi, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted. The study concludes that N-Health programme has a significant impact on youth empowerment in Cross River State.

Hypothesis 2:

N-Agro programme has no significant impact on youth empowerment in Cross River State.

	Responses				
Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total
N-Agro programme	2 (1.7)	2 (1.7)	7 (8.1)	6 (5.53)	17
Youth empowerment	2 (2.3)	2 (2.3)	12 (11.0)	7 (7.48)	23

Table 3: Chi-Square (X<sup>2</sup>) Response on N-Health and Youth Empowerment in Cross River State

Calculated X<sup>2</sup> 6.25, Table value of Chi -5.99, Level of significance -.05, df- 2

Response in Table 3 showed that the calculated chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) value is 6.25, while the table value at the .05 level of significance is 5.99. Since the calculated value of X<sup>2</sup> is greater than the table value of chi, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative. The result obtained shows that the N-Agro programme has a significant impact on youth empowerment in Cross River State.

## Discussion

The first result of the study states that the N-Health programme has a significant impact on youth empowerment in Cross River State. The programme is designed to provide internship opportunities for trained youths in medical facilities across the country and state as the case with

this study. This category has had a significant effect on engaging the youths in the state. Zainab, Abubakar, Kalli, Yusuf, Hadiza, and Bukar (2024), assert that the N-Health Programme has a positive impact on employment generation among its beneficiaries, effectively addressing the pressing issue of youth unemployment. Additionally, the programme has moderately reduced poverty by offering employment opportunities and facilitating skill development, thereby improving the economic well-being of its participants.

Also, the study found that the N-Agro programme has a significant impact on youth empowerment in Cross River State. This provides opportunities for the training of beneficiaries in relevant skills for agriculture. Olorunsola (2022) disclosed that training youths in agriculture is a veritable tool for employment and productivity. Zainab, Abubakar, Kalli, Yusuf, Hadiza, and Bukar (2024) added that N-Power aspires to provide a platform where most Nigerians can access skills acquisition and development.

## Conclusion

The study examined the impact of the N-Power programme on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Cross River State, Nigeria from 2016 to 2021. The findings of the study have shown that the N-Power programme is a useful tool and strategy to empower youths and reduce poverty in Nigeria if well implemented. But with the growing teeming youth population and unemployment, there is need to expand the framework of social empowerment policies in Nigeria. Nigeria needs policies that can support firm growth to expand wage jobs, build productivity in farm and non-farm household enterprises, and help match the skills of school leavers with those that the economy needs most.

## Recommendations

This study recommends the following as strategies to curb youth unemployment in Nigeria,

1. The N-Power beneficiaries who have been empowered through skill acquisition should be given soft loans to set up their businesses. Thus, the Federal Government should provide interest-free loans to interested volunteers to start up their small or medium-scale enterprises after their vocational training.
2. The empowered youths through the N-Power programme should be linked to job opportunities and credit facilities after completing their vocational training. More so, the beneficiaries that are up and doing should be retained and permanently employed. They should be posted close to their areas of assignment.
3. There should be levels of accountability and transparency in the implementation of the programme. The federal government should adequately release and monitor funding of social empowerment programmes for the smooth and effective implementation.

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