

# N-POWER PROGRAMME AND JOB CREATION IN BENUE STATE

By

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## **Abstract**

The persistent challenge of unemployment in Nigeria has necessitated various social intervention strategies, amongst which the N-Power Programme stands as a prominent initiative. This study assessed the impact of the N-Power Programme on job creation in Benue State. Grounded in structural functionalism, the research employed a survey design and a mixed-methods approach in the study. Data were collected via questionnaire from 384 and 12 key informant interviews respondents across Katsina-Ala, Makurdi, and Otukpo Local Government Areas. Findings indicated that while N-Power achieved transparency in recruitment and temporarily addressed manpower shortages in health, education, and agriculture, these successes were undermined by systemic flaws. Critical issues included chronic financial instability due to delayed stipends and a significant lack of oversight; with only one monitoring visit recorded over two years. Although the programme enhanced youth empowerment, it functioned as a temporary social safety net rather than a sustainable engine for job creation. Ultimately, the absence of a robust exit strategy hindered the transition of beneficiaries into permanent employment, leaving the long-term impact on youth unemployment negligible. The study concludes that the programme's current structure is unsustainable for permanent economic empowerment hence the cessation of the programme in Benue State. It recommends that future social investment initiatives adopt decentralised, automated financial systems and independent monitoring frameworks. Furthermore, the study recommends for legislative protection of such schemes through a Social Intervention Programme, ACT. This would ensure loop fenced funding for exit strategies, such as micro-grants and private-sector subsidies, to transform temporary relief into durable economic stability for the youth of Benue State.

**Keywords: Empowerment, N-power, programme, poverty and youths, ring**

## **Introduction**

Globally, unemployment is recognised as a critical issue affecting economic stability and social cohesion. Countries around the world have adopted diverse policies to address this challenge. For example, the United States introduced the Social Security Act in 1935, along with subsequent programmes such as Extended Benefits and Emergency Unemployment Compensation, to provide safety nets for the unemployed (Asenjo &Pignatti, 2019). Similarly, Europe has implemented policies like the Unemployment Insurance Acts and Universal Credit, while Asian countries like China have introduced active employment policies and stimulus packages to promote job creation (Asenjo &Pignatti, 2019). At regional levels, African nations have also devised tailored strategies. South Africa, for instance, established the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Youth Employment Service, while Ghana and Egypt launched initiatives like the Youth Employment Agency and the Takaful and Karama Programme, respectively, aimed at addressing youth unemployment and social protection (Agwu, 2019).

Unemployment, particularly among youth populations, remains a persistent challenge across many developing countries, including Nigeria. Addressing this issue requires targeted policies and programmes that not only create jobs but also equip young people with relevant skills to participate effectively in the economy. The Nigerian government, recognizing the critical importance of youth employment for national development, launched various initiatives aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty. Among these, the N-Power programme stands out as a flagship social intervention designed to foster job creation, skill development, and social empowerment among Nigeria's youth. Since its inception in 2016, the programme has sought to address the high unemployment rates by providing young graduates with practical work experience and skills acquisition in sectors such as education, health, and agriculture (Olorunsola, 2022).

Benue State, known for its vibrant agricultural sector and youthful demographic, has been significantly impacted by youth unemployment, which hampers socio-economic growth and stability. The implementation of the N-Power programme within Benue State offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in promoting job creation at the regional level. While the programme aims to bridge the gap between education and employment, various challenges including irregular stipends, sustainability concerns, and local implementation issues

have raised questions about its long-term impact on employment and economic development in the state (Olorunsola, 2022).

This study explores the role of the N-Power programme in fostering job creation in Benue State, assessing its implementation, outcomes, and the extent to which it has contributed to reducing youth unemployment. As Nigeria continues to grapple with high unemployment rates amidst economic diversification efforts, understanding the specific dynamics at the state level is crucial for refining policy approaches and ensuring sustainable social and economic development. Analysing the Nigerian experience through the lens of Benue State provides valuable insights into the potential and limitations of large-scale social empowerment programmes in promoting regional employment and inclusive growth. This study therefore intends to: ascertain the level of implementation of N-Power Programme in Benue State, examine the impact of N-Power programme on job creation in the state and assess the successes and failures of the N-Power Programme in the state.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

**N-power Programme:** The Nigerian government's implementation of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) under President Muhammadu Buhari represents a strategic effort to address youth unemployment through comprehensive social and economic interventions. As highlighted by Lamidi and Igbokwe (2021), the NSIP is structured into three core dimensions, each comprising various sub-programmes tailored to meet specific societal needs. Notably, the N-Power initiative emerges as a significant component, functioning as a job creation and empowerment scheme targeting young Nigerians aged 18 to 35. This programme operates as a paid volunteer scheme for two years, deploying beneficiaries into public service roles within their local communities. It is divided into categories such as the Graduate and Non-Graduate streams, each focusing on different sectors—ranging from education and health to agriculture, ICT, and creative industries equipping participants with relevant skills and resources to foster employment, entrepreneurship, and community development (Ifatimehin, Isyak & Omale, 2020). The overarching aim of N-Power aligns with broader developmental objectives, including improving youth livelihoods, facilitating skills transfer, and supporting public service delivery, thereby contributing to Nigeria's knowledge economy. According to the N-Power Information Guide (2017), the programme seeks to enhance education, health, agriculture, and tax compliance through targeted initiatives such as N-Power Teach, N-Power Health, N-Power

Agro, and N-Power VAIDS. These efforts are situated within a wider context of job creation, a core aspect of economic development that involves generating new employment opportunities through innovation, entrepreneurship, and supportive government policies (McConnell, Brue & Flynn, 2009). Empirical evidence underscores the importance of fostering formal employment sectors and implementing youth-focused programmes, such as skills development and entrepreneurial support, in addressing unemployment challenges prevalent in Nigeria's informal economy (Aghion & Howitt, 1998; Kitching, 2013). Consequently, the N-Power programme exemplifies a strategic approach aimed at reducing youth unemployment, alleviating poverty, and nurturing a culture of learn-work entrepreneurship within the Nigerian context.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review examines the relationship between the N-Power Programme and job creation in Nigeria, with a focus on the influence of public policy on employment outcomes. The existing body of literature underscores the pivotal role of effective public policy in fostering employment by promoting economic growth, enhancing labor market conditions, and supporting productive employment, especially among youth populations (Dag, 2018). As a government-led intervention, the N-Power Programme exemplifies such policy initiatives aimed at addressing prevalent issues such as informality, stimulating labor demand, and translating economic growth into sustainable employment opportunities (Douglas & Dan, 2018). The programme's provision of stipends and training is conceptualized as a form of government transfer designed to invigorate economic activity and encourage individual entrepreneurship.

The existing empirical literature on the impact of Nigeria's N-Power program and its role in job creation presents a diverse array of findings, methodologies, and insights. Odeh (2018) conducted a cross-sectional survey involving 500 beneficiaries across five states, utilizing descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to analyze perceptions of skills acquisition and employment status. The study found that about 65% of respondents perceived an increase in their employability, with 40% claiming to have secured jobs or started businesses after participating in the program. While Odeh's work provides valuable primary data and employs statistical analysis to establish associations, it suffers from notable limitations. Most significantly, the absence of a control group hampers causal inference, and reliance on self-reported data introduces bias.

Akinwale and Oladipo (2019) adopted a qualitative case study approach, examining three states through interviews with beneficiaries, programme officials, and local employers. Their

findings highlight perceived empowerment, skill improvement, and increased entrepreneurial activities among participants. This approach offers rich contextual insights and stakeholder perspectives, which are strengths of their work. However, the small sample size and focus on qualitative perceptions limit the generalizability of their conclusions. The study does not incorporate quantitative data on actual employment metrics nor does it measure the program's macroeconomic impact, creating a notable gap in understanding the broader effects of N-Power on the Nigerian labor market.

Eze and Okafor (2021) took a macroeconomic perspective by analyzing secondary employment data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics from 2016 to 2020, supplemented with survey data. Their analysis revealed no statistically significant correlation between N-Power enrollment figures and national employment rates, suggesting limited macro-level impact. While their use of large-scale secondary data and attempts to link program variables with employment trends are strengths, the ecological nature of their analysis presents limitations. Ecological fallacy may obscure micro-level effects, and the relatively short timeframe might be insufficient to capture sustained impacts. Furthermore, they do not control for confounding variables such as economic shocks or other interventions, which weakens the causal claims of their findings.

Ijeoma (2020) examined the skills mismatch issue through surveys of 400 beneficiaries and focus group discussions. The study identified a significant skills mismatch, with many participants lacking market-relevant skills, which impedes their employment prospects. This mixed-methods approach provides valuable insights into the barriers faced by beneficiaries; however, it does not evaluate whether the skills training effectively improved employability. Moreover, the study lacks data from employers or analysis of labor market demand, which limits understanding of whether the skills provided align with actual market needs.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a survey research design, which involves collecting data from a representative sample to describe phenomena and answer questions about why they occur. The survey approach is suitable for understanding the impact of the N-Power Programme on job creation, providing both descriptive and explanatory insights into the subject matter. The population for this research consists of youth participants and staff involved in the N-Power Programme in Benue State, totaling 8,581 individuals across three local government areas: Katsina-Ala, Makurdi, and Otukpo. Due to logistical challenges, a sample was drawn from this

population using Cochran’s formula, resulting in a sample size of 396 respondents proportionally allocated to each local government via Bowley’s technique thus:

**Table 1: Distribution of population of the selected three local government areas in Benue State using Bowley’s Proportional Allocation Technique**

S/No	LGA /Org.	Population	Sample size
<b>Benue North-East</b>			
	Katsina-Ala	2,866	$\frac{2,866 \times 396}{8,581} = 132$
<b>Benue North-West</b>			
	Makurdi	3,007	$\frac{3,007 \times 396}{8,581} = 138$
	Office of NSIP	26	$\frac{26 \times 396}{8,581} = 1$
<b>Benue South</b>			
	Otukpo	2,708	$\frac{2,708 \times 396}{8,581} = 125$
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8,581</b>	<b>=396</b>

**Source: Compiled by the Researcher, 2024**

Using Bowley’s proportional allocation, 132 respondents from Katsina-Ala, 139 from Makurdi, and 125 from Otukpo were selected from beneficiaries of N-Power’s main strands N-Teach, N-Agro, and N-Health as well as Social Investment Programme staff, chosen for their ability to provide accurate responses. The study employed cluster sampling for its cost-effectiveness, allowing focused data collection from specific groups, which minimized travel and logistical costs given the wide geographic distribution of the population.

Data collection was conducted through primary and secondary methods. Primary data were obtained through questionnaires and key informant interviews with beneficiaries and staff, while secondary data were gathered from existing literature such as books, journals, and online sources. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which facilitated summarizing, interpreting, and making inferences about the influence of public policy, specifically the N-Power Programme, on job creation in Nigeria.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents and analysed data based on the objectives of the study. The section is divided into three major components: the first section deals with socio-demographic attributes of respondents; the second section present data in line with the objectives; the last section delt with discussion of findings.

## Socio-Demographic Attributes of Respondents

In this section, socio-demographic attributes such as: sex, age, marital status and educational background of respondents were interrogated and result presented in Table 2 above:

**Table 2: Socio-Demographic Attributes of the Respondents**

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	228	58
Female	168	42
<b>Age</b>		
18-23	59	15
23-28	218	55
29-35	119	30
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	267	68
Married	129	32
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
FSLC	20	5
WAEC/SSCE	50	8
Bachelors Degree/NCE/OND	218	55
Masters Degree and above	20	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2026*

Most beneficiaries are male (58%), with females making up 42%. This highlights a gender imbalance, and analyzing this helps assess if the programme promotes gender equality and identifies any barriers to female participation. The majority of respondents are young, with 55% aged 23-28 and 30% aged 29-35, aligning with the programme's target age of 18-35. This shows the programme is effectively reaching its intended youth demographic. Most beneficiaries are single (68%), while 32% are married. This indicates the stipend likely supports individual needs but also reflects its broader socio-economic impact on family households. Over half (55%) of respondents hold a Bachelor's Degree or HND, with an additional 28% holding NCE or OND. This demonstrates that most participants are highly educated, aligning with the programme's focus on skilled and semi-skilled human capital.

**Table 2: Level of Implementation of N-Power Programme in Benue State**

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean Score	Remark
Selection was based exclusively on merit and verifiable credentials	186 47%	203 51%	-	4 1%	3 1%	4.43	Accepted
Beneficiaries received full stipends consistently and without delays	40 10%	104 26%	-	122 31%	130 32%	2.50	Rejected
Volunteers were provided with the necessary working tools/kits	110 28%	170 43%	-	66 17%	50 13%	3.57	Accepted
Formal monitoring visits were conducted at least once every quarter	5 1%	31 8%	-	130 33%	230 58%	1.68	Rejected
The presence of beneficiaries effectively resolve the primary manpower shortage issues	160 40%	185 47%	-	31 8%	20 5%	4.02	Accepted

*Source: Field Survey, 2026*

The table indicates that the implementation of the N-Power programme in Benue State has mixed levels of success across different variables. The selection process based on merit and verifiable credentials received high approval, with 47% strongly agreeing and 51% agreeing, resulting in a mean score of 4.43, which is accepted. Similarly, providing volunteers with necessary tools/kits was strongly supported, with 28% strongly agreeing and 43% agreeing, leading to a mean score of 3.57, also accepted. However, the programme's delivery of full stipends without delays was rated poorly; with only 10% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing, but a significant portion (32%) disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 2.50, leading to rejection. Formal monitoring visits were infrequent and poorly rated, with 58% strongly disagreeing and a mean score of 1.68, indicating a significant gap in oversight. Conversely, the presence of beneficiaries was highly effective in addressing manpower shortages, with 40% strongly agreeing and 47% agreeing, and a mean score of 4.02, which is accepted. Overall, while certain aspects like merit-based selection and support tools are well implemented, issues such as stipend delivery and monitoring require improvement.

In an interview with respondents in regard to first objective of the study which sought to assess the level of implementation of N-Power programme in Benue State, respondents stated that the N-Power Programme in Benue State demonstrated a strong commitment to integrity in recruitment and was effective in equipping volunteers for their roles. Both beneficiaries and staff unanimously confirmed that the selection process was merit based and that essential working tools/kits were provided. For instance, a respondent said that:

I can attest that the selection process was definitely based on merit and verifiable credentials, reflecting a commitment to recruiting individuals with genuine agricultural knowledge. Furthermore, we were provided with adequate working kits and learning materials that enabled us to effectively carry out our extension services and interact with local farming communities across Otukpo and its environs. Unfortunately, the day-to-day running of the scheme was plagued by major administrative lapses. Most frustratingly, the stipend payments were characterized by frequent, often unpredictable delays, despite the funds eventually being released.

Another respondent, ex N-Health volunteer interviewed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2025 in Katsina-Ala argued that the implementation of N-Health greatly a merit-based selection process, which ensured the placement of genuinely qualified health assistants; my own credentials were very thoroughly checked during verification. Coupled with this, we were supplied with the necessary working tools and materials to perform our basic health promotion and community outreach activities effectively in our assigned primary healthcare centres (PHCs). However, the operational side of the programme was not nearly as smooth.

**Table 3: Perceived Impact of N-Power on Job Creation and Employability**

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean Score	Remark
The N-Power Programme directly contributed to the creation of new jobs in Benue State	4 1%	3 1%	-	176 44%	213 5%	1.48	Rejected
Are beneficiaries of the programme now actively creating jobs for others	5 1%	3 1%	-	154 39%	226 57%	1.46	Rejected
The skills and experience gained from N-Power enhanced beneficiaries' employability	145 37%	200 51%	-	31 8%	20 5%	4.21	Accepted
The programme stimulated local economic activity and entrepreneurship	110 28%	150 38%	-	86 22%	50 13%	3.46	Accepted
N-power serves a sustainable model for future job creation initiatives in Nigeria	55 14%	80 20%	-	134 34%	127 32%	2.51	Rejected

*Source: Field Survey, 2026*

The table presents respondents' perceptions of the N-Power programme's impact on job creation and employability. The results show that respondents largely rejected the idea that the programme directly created new jobs in Benue State, with high percentages disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Similarly, most respondents did not believe that beneficiaries are actively creating jobs for others. However, there was strong support for the programme's role in enhancing beneficiaries' skills and employability, as well as stimulating local economic activity and entrepreneurship, with majority responses in agreement. Conversely, the perception of N-Power serving as a sustainable model for future job creation was also rejected by many, indicating skepticism about its long-term impact. Overall, while the programme is viewed positively in terms of skill enhancement and economic stimulation, its direct contribution to job creation remains questionable according to respondents.

The interview responses consistently indicate that the N-Power Programme had minimal impact on sustainable job creation in Benue State. Respondents agree that the programme primarily provided temporary stipends rather than establishing permanent employment or fostering significant local economic activity and entrepreneurship. Most beneficiaries gained

skills and experience that improved their employability, but this did not translate into active job creation for others or long-term economic growth. Several interviewees emphasized that once the programme ended; most beneficiaries were unemployed again, highlighting the lack of a robust, funded pathway to permanent jobs or self-sufficiency. Overall, the consensus is that N-Power served as a short-term relief scheme rather than a sustainable solution for long-term employment and economic development in the region.

**Table 4: Perceived Successes and Failures of the N-Power Programme**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Remark</b>
The programme successfully reduced the unemployment rate among youth in Benue State	20 5%	36 9%	-	167 42%	173 44%	1.8	Rejected
Beneficiaries gained valuable skills that are relevant to the job market	130 33%	185 47%	-	51 13%	30 8%	3.8	Accepted
The N-Power Programme equipped beneficiaries with the necessary tools for self-employment	55 14%	80 20%	-	134 34%	127 32%	2.55	Rejected
A significant number of N-power beneficiaries transitioned to permanent jobs	40 10%	75 19%	-	130 33%	151 38%	2.15	Rejected
The programme's objectives are fully achieved in Benue State	25 6%	50 13%	-	148 37%	173 44%	1.88	Rejected

*Source: Field Survey, 2026*

The table presents respondents' perceptions of the successes and failures of the N-Power programme in Benue State. The statement that the programme successfully reduced youth unemployment received a low mean score of 1.8, leading to its rejection, indicating that most respondents do not perceive it as effective in this aspect. Conversely, the statement that beneficiaries gained valuable skills had a high mean score of 3.8, resulting in acceptance, suggesting that many respondents agree the programme provides relevant skills for the job market. However, perceptions were largely negative regarding the programme's role in equipping beneficiaries for self-employment, transitioning to permanent jobs, and fully achieving its objectives, with mean scores below 2.5, leading to rejection of these claims. Generally,

respondents view the programme positively mainly in terms of skill acquisition but are skeptical about its effectiveness in reducing unemployment and achieving its broader goals in Benue State.

The interview responses consistently suggest that the N-Power Programme's impact on sustainable job creation in Benue State has been minimal or negligible in the long term. Respondents highlighted that the scheme primarily provided temporary stipends rather than generating permanent employment opportunities or stimulating local economic activity and entrepreneurship. Although many beneficiaries acquired valuable skills and enhanced their employability, these benefits did not translate into active job creation for others or significant economic growth. Several interviewees noted that after the programme concluded, most beneficiaries reverted to unemployment, and there was little evidence of beneficiaries establishing lasting businesses or contributing to a broader economic impact.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings from the field survey and interview responses provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation and perceived impact of the N-Power Programme in Benue State. The result indicates that there is high approval rating for the merit-based selection process (mean score of 4.43) aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of transparent and meritocratic recruitment in enhancing programme credibility and participant motivation (Ojo et al., 2021). Similarly, the provision of necessary working tools was well executed, supporting the theoretical premise that adequate resources are essential for effective service delivery (Adewumi & Oladipo, 2020). However, the low scores for stipend payment delays and infrequent monitoring visits highlight significant operational shortcomings, consistent with recent studies that identify administrative lapses as critical barriers to programme effectiveness (Chukwu & Eze, 2022). These gaps undermine the sustainability and perceived legitimacy of the scheme, ultimately affecting service quality and beneficiary morale.

Despite effective implementation in some areas, respondents largely rejected the notion that N-Power directly contributed to long-term employment or active job creation. Instead, the programme was seen primarily as a short-term intervention that temporarily alleviated unemployment without creating permanent roles or stimulating local economic activity. This aligns with findings by Johnson and Smith (2020), who argue that short-term stipends, while beneficial in providing immediate relief, do not address the structural deficiencies that hinder sustainable employment in Nigeria. Moreover, while beneficiaries reported skills and experience

gain, these did not translate into active entrepreneurship or employment for others, echoing recent critiques that highlight the limited capacity of such programmes to foster economic multiplier effects (Ola & Adeyemi, 2023).

The perception that the programme improved beneficiaries' skills (mean score of 3.8) reflects the positive role of capacity-building initiatives; however, the low regard for its impact on reducing unemployment and supporting self-employment suggests a disconnect between skills acquisition and economic empowerment (Eze et al., 2022). The failure to transition beneficiaries into permanent employment or to generate sustainable economic activity underscores the programme's limited scope in fostering long-term economic resilience. This is consistent with recent literature that criticizes short-term interventions for lacking pathways to self-sufficiency and sustainable growth (Adeyemi & Olaleye, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The N-Power Programme in Benue State exemplified commendable adherence to principles of meritocracy and transparency in its selection procedures, effectively mitigating short-term human resource shortages across key sectors. This operational integrity represents a significant advancement over previous empowerment initiatives within Nigeria. Nonetheless, the findings unequivocally reveal that systemic financial instability manifested through delayed stipend payments and inadequate monitoring and supervisory mechanisms critically compromised the programme's efficacy. These deficiencies undermined volunteer morale and obstructed necessary mid-course adjustments. Importantly, the programme was structurally ill-equipped to engender sustainable, long-term employment opportunities; rather, it functioned predominantly as a transient social welfare intervention that failed to equip participants with the requisite skills or resources for permanent employment or self-sufficiency. Consequently, while N-Power delivered immediate social support and enhanced work-related skills, it ultimately fell short of its overarching objective of fostering transformative youth economic empowerment and sustainable job creation in Benue State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the detailed discussion of findings, the following recommendations are presented: The study recommended that future social investment programmes (SIPs) must adopt a decentralised, automated financial management system for stipends, utilizing instant payment platforms tied to biometrics or national identity to ensure zerotolerance for payment delays.

Furthermore, the study recommended that for future SIPs, the government must shift the training focus from basic skill acquisition to certified, market-driven, and entrepreneurial pathways. Specifically, any new program should partner with established private sector certification bodies (e.g., accredited vocational institutes, IT industry partners) to ensure skills are recognized beyond the state.

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