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Impact assessment of N-Power scheme on human development in Bida Local Government Area, Niger State (2016–2020)

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Abstract

This study, which has implications for future policy development, examined the effectuality and impact of the N-Power programme, a youth empowerment and poverty reduction programme in Bida Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria. The programme aimed to build human capacity and raise the quality of life. The study adopted human capital theory. Data were qualitatively and quantitatively collected via 320 questionnaires (285 returned) from a population of 1,598 N-Power beneficiaries. Despite reaching the target population, most disengaged beneficiaries affirmed the programme did not contribute significantly to capacity building as only a small subset of the participants acquired valuable and technical skills, thereby falling short of improving quality of lives. The authors suggest subsequent poverty reduction programmes should focus on Small and Medium Enterprises, and vocational/technical skills training, and the need for the development of a nation's physical infrastructure which will serve as a ground floor in building human capacity.

Key words: impact, development, programme, youth, Nigeria

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Introduction and background

Human capacity and physical development are integral to any nation. Development is so important that it is of no surprise that nations of the world are categorised into developed, developing and under-developed nations. However, no nation of the world can develop beyond the abilities and potentials of her citizenry. Until the citizens of a nation are bolstered to achieve their potential level of economic, social and political freedom, such a nation remains underdeveloped. From empirical facts, most underdeveloped-turned-developed nations of the world attained development through investment in human capital. Critical examples of these countries are the “Asian Tigers” (Agba & Patience, 2018).

Developed nations attained developed status through policies or programmes that invest massively in human capital development. Corroborating this, former President of African Development Bank, Kaberuka (2017), opined that human capital development was the cornerstone of transformation in developed nations, which Africa must emulate. Critical examples of these developed countries are the “Asian Tigers” South Korea and Taiwan. Hence, this has consistently been a system of attaining development for most developed and developing nations. In the same vein, developing nations like Nigeria seeking to attain development, in recent years have come up with policies or programmes that seek to improve the population quality in terms of skills acquisition and physical wellbeing. One of such programmes in Nigeria is the N-Power scheme. The N-Power programme is a job creation scheme created by the Federal Government to facilitate entrepreneurial culture among Nigerian youths between the age of 18–35 through skills acquisition and social development. Unlike most previous poverty reduction programmes which focus on monetary or material gifts as means of building human capacities and curtailing poverty on a temporal basis, N-Power focuses on human capital development as a means of achieving long-term development.

The development of a nation is hinged on the ability of the government to effectively empower its citizenry into becoming productive. This has been a challenge in Nigeria as the plight of poverty, ailing public sector and unemployment have beset the country over the years. In a bid to combat the three aforementioned menaces, the President Buhari Administration introduced the N-Power programme with the end goal of developing human capacity towards ensuring social development and reducing poverty. In light of this, this paper probes the role of the N-Power programme in terms of human and social development. The study seeks to assess the effectiveness of the programme’s contribution towards human capacity building as an indispensable factor towards the achievement of national and sustainable development in Nigeria.

The objective of the study is to evaluate the efficacy of the N-Power programme on the study area as relating to human development. Specifically, the research intends to determine the extent to which the N-Power programme has contributed to human capital development. The research question: “What impact has the N-Power programme created in promoting human and sustainable development?” was raised to guide the research in the attempt to provide a solution to the research problem. The hypothesis was that there is no significant relationship between the N-Power programme and human capacity development in Bida Local Government Area.

Literature review

The N-Power scheme has mostly been evaluated by how much it reduces youth unemployment and poverty, thus reflecting human development benefits. Ahmed (2025) administered a mixed-methods study to 348 respondents from Dekina, Lokoja, and Okene in Kogi State who were beneficiaries of N-Teach, N-Health, and N-Agro components and recorded improved entrepreneurial skills and better livelihoods. This paper argues that practical skill acquisition can translate into empowerment that leads to income generation and is what will reduce poverty.

In addition, Bisong (2019) conducted a survey among 250 beneficiaries in Cross River State, recording a very strong positive relationship between the creation of employment opportunities, economic well-being, and enhancement of job skills with N-Power participation through Pearson correlation. Their work underscores the programme’s contribution to strengthening economic inclusion among young people.

Similarly, Nwaobi (2019) applied panel data models to study the impact of the scheme on the duration of unemployment at the national level and advocated for an appraisal in the short, medium, and long terms. His

results confirm that N-Power has prospects for tackling structural youth unemployment in Nigeria. This essentially opens up discourse to further information relating to sustained economic outcomes.

These studies are predominantly quantitative survey designs validated by mixed methods or econometric analyses that validate the positive socio-economic impacts of N-Power. However, limitations include regional focus which do not allow for broader generalisation, a short-term horizon of assessment, and scant qualitative insight into the lived experiences of beneficiaries.

Theoretical framework

This study adopted the Public Sector Human Capital Investment Theory. The Public Sector Human Capital Investment Theory propounded by Aina (2025) postulated that national and sustainable development depends heavily on government investments in human capital through education, healthcare and social services. This theory asserted that these investments improve workforce productivity and social welfare creating a platform for long-term growth. It further emphasised the significance of education, training and health in developing human capital.

This theory fits Nigeria's attempt to attain development through the aid of social investment programmes. This is affirmative because few of the previous poverty reduction programmes, including the N-Power programme, centre around human capital development which shares a great similarity with the core themes of the Public Sector Human Capital Investment Theory by Aina. Hence, the study's finding validates the theory by highlighting the importance of effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of human capital investment programmes. Through this theory, this study highlights the importance of addressing the implementation gaps such as inadequate staff training for the participants and lack of evaluation mechanism which might have contributed to the programme's limited impact on human development.

Ultimately, this suggests that the Public Sector Human Capital Investment Theory is a form of (social) investments made by the government to empower the disadvantaged population into having an improved earning, being employable, self-reliance, and ensuring national progress. This is what the N-Power programme represents.

Methodology

Research design

The research design adopted for this study was the survey design.

Bida is a Local Government Area located in Niger State, North Central, Nigeria. Bida occupies an area of 51 square kilometres with a population of 318,300 (National Population Commission, 2020). Bida is predominantly occupied by the Nupe tribe. It shares borders with other towns like Badeggi, Gbako, and Lavun, among others. Significant landmarks in Bida include: Federal Medical Centre, Federal Polytechnic, Federal Government Girls' College, Emir Palace and Round About Old Market Road.

Population of the study comprised all Batch A and Batch B beneficiaries of the N-Power programme in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State. Batch A and B beneficiaries were selected in order to obtain accurate, reliable and comprehensive data for the study and as well achieve the generalisability of the study. There were 863 beneficiaries in Batch A, and 735 beneficiaries in Batch B, totalling 1,598 beneficiaries in Bida Local Government Area as provided by the National Orientation Agency Bida Local Area office. 1,598 comprised the population for the study.

This study gathered its data from two main sources, namely primary and secondary. The primary data consisted of responses that were obtained from respondents through a well-structured questionnaire (disengaged N-Power

beneficiaries, Batch A and B) on the field. On the other hand, this work utilised written materials of the library such as textbooks, journals, internet materials and newspapers as a secondary source of data.

This study determined its sample size through the Yamane formula.

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

In the formula above:

n is the required sample size from the population under study.

N is the whole population that is under study.

e is the precision or sampling error which is usually 0.10, 0.05 or 0.01.

Using the Taro Yamane’s statistical formula to determine the adequate sample size of 1,598 respondents under study. This would be:

$$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

$$n = \text{sample size}; N = 1,598; e = 0.05$$

$$n = 1,598 / (1 + 1,598 (0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 320 \text{ (sample size).}$$

The study adopted the use of purposive sampling technique where the researcher chose the respondents at his own discretion from the sampling frame. Here, the researcher relied on his own judgement in choosing the members (respondents) of the population who participated in the study.

Elicited data were analysed through descriptive techniques (frequencies and percentages) and analytical tables. Thus, percentages were used to determine frequency of opinion of the respondents. Equally, t-test was used as a statistical method deployed for this study, to test the hypotheses in this study.

Results

Data presentation and analysis

Table 1: Questionnaires returned analysis

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned	285	89.1%
Not Returned	35	10.9%
Total (distributed)	320	100%

Source: *Field survey (2023).*

From the table above, the findings reveal that 320 questionnaires were distributed among N-Power beneficiaries. Out of these questionnaires administered, 285 (89.1%) were returned. This means that 35 (10.9%) questionnaires, out of 320 questionnaires distributed, were completely discarded from the analysis as a result of no or partial response to the questionnaires administered. Only 285 completed questionnaires were the basis for computing and interpreting the results.

Some fundamental questions as presented in the subsequent tables below were administered and frequencies of responses scored in the scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) were collated to understand the efficacy of the poverty reduction programme on human and national development in Nigeria.

Demographic analysis

Table 2: Demographic data

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	177	62.1%
Female	108	37.9%
Total	285	100%

Age range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
22–27 years	21	7.3%
28–35 years	175	61.4%
35–40 years	89	31.3%
Total	285	100%

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	132	46.3%
Married	144	50.5%
Divorced	9	3.2%
Total	285	100%

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSCE	15	5.3%
NCE	38	13.3%
HND	106	37.2%
B.Sc.	111	39%
M.Sc.	15	5.2%
Total	285	100%

N-Power compartment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
N-Power Agro	16	5.6%
N-Power Health	50	17.5%
N-Power Teach	176	61.8%
N-Power Tax	28	9.8%
N-Power Knowledge	8	2.8%
N-Power Build	7	2.5%
Total	285	100%

Years of engagement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1–2	183	64.2%
3–4	102	35.8%
Total	285	100%

Source: Field survey (2023).

The result depicted in Table 2 shows the data collected from the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as sex, age range, marital status, educational qualification, N-Power compartment, and years of engagement, working experience, religion and the status of the respondents. The table indicated that 177 respondents representing 62.1% of the total population are male while 108 respondents which represent 37.9% of the respondents are female. Therefore, it could be inferred that the majority of the respondents are male. The implication of this is that there were more male beneficiaries than female beneficiaries, denoting that males are more actively involved in the scheme than women in Bida Local Government Area.

It was also revealed from the age distribution that 21 respondents, representing 7.3%, are within the age of 22–27 years, 175 respondents with a proportion of 61.4% of the total respondents fall within the age of 28–35 years, and 89 respondents with a value of 31.3% of the total population are within the age of 35 years and above. It is however revealed that a larger proportion of the respondents fall within the age of 28–35 years; this implies that most of the beneficiaries are still in the youth age bracket.

The marital status of the respondents reveals that 132 are single with a percentage of 46.3% of the total population, 144 respondents are married with a value of 50.5% while 9 respondents are divorced representing 3.2% of the total population. This implies most of the N-Power beneficiaries have families they are fending for.

The educational qualification of the respondents reveals that 15 respondents are SSCE holders representing 5.3% of the total population. 38 respondents are NCE holders with a value of 13.3%. 106 respondents have HND with a percentage of 37.2% of the total population, 111 respondents are B.Sc. holders with a value of 39%, and 15 respondents which represent 5.2% of the total respondents are M.Sc. holders. With this result it could be inferred that a large proportion of the respondents are HND and B.Sc. holders which indicate a higher percentage, denoting they are quite educated, which means they are capable of supplying adequate and reliable information.

N-Power compartments of the respondents indicated that 16 respondents which represent 5.6% of the total respondents were in N-Power Agro. 50 respondents which represent 17.5% of the total respondents were in N-Power Health. 176 respondents which represent 61.8% of the total respondents were in N-Power Teach. 28 respondents which represent 9.8% of the total respondents were in N-Power Tax. 8 respondents which represent 2.8% of the total respondents were in N-Power Knowledge. 7 respondents which represent 2.5% of the total respondents were in N-Power Build. This implies that a significant proportion of the beneficiaries in the N-Power scheme falls into the N-Teach category.

The years of engagement of the respondents in the N-Power scheme indicated that 183 respondents representing 64.2% of the respondents were engaged maximally for 2 years while 102 respondents which represent 35.8% were engaged within 3–4 years. This reveals that the respondents who were engaged maximally for 2 years were Batch B N-Power beneficiaries while respondents who were engaged maximally for 3–4 years were Batch A N-Power beneficiaries.

Impact of the N-Power programme in promoting human and sustainable development

Table 3: Response rate on how N-Power has helped in acquisition of entrepreneurial and technical skills for its beneficiaries

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	27	9.5%
Agree	21	7.4%
Disagree	87	30.5%
Strongly disagree	150	52.6%
Total	285	100%

Source: Field survey (2023).

The result in Table 3 reveals the response of respondents on how N-Power has assisted in the acquisition of entrepreneurial and technical skills for its beneficiaries. Out of the 285 beneficiaries, 237 (83.1%), a combination of strongly disagree and disagree, respondents indicated that the programme did not aid in the acquisition of entrepreneurial and technical skills, connoting most of the beneficiaries in various compartments especially the non-graduate category were not adequately trained to acquire skills due to administrative and environmental constraints, while 48 (16.9%), a combination of strongly agree and agree, respondents indicated they acquired entrepreneurial and technical skills through the programme.

Table 4: Response rate on whether N-Power has actualised the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged population

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	95	33.3%
Agree	73	25.7%
Disagree	61	21.4%
Strongly disagree	56	19.6%
Total	285	100%

Source: Field survey (2023).

The result in Table 4 reveals the response of respondents on whether N-Power has actualised the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged population. 168 (59%), a combination of strongly agree and agree, respondents agreed that the programme actualised the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged population, connoting the programme recruited the vulnerable; those the scheme was intended for, while 117 (41%), a combination of strongly disagree and disagree, respondents felt the programme did not actualise the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged population, connoting part of the participants of the programme were not worthy beneficiaries as they were not part of the vulnerable people.

Table 5: Response rate on whether N-Power has helped build Human Development Index in terms of health, education and standard of living among beneficiaries

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	46	16.2%
Agree	37	13%
Disagree	107	37.5%
Strongly disagree	95	33.3%
Total	285	100%

Source: Field survey (2023).

The result in Table 5 reveals the response of respondents on whether N-Power has helped build Human Development Index in terms of health, education and standard of living among beneficiaries. 202 (70.8%), a combination of strongly disagree and disagree, respondents posited that the programme did not help build Human Development Index, while 83 (29.2%), a combination of strongly agree and agree, felt the programme helped build Human Development Index in terms of health, education and standard of living.

Table 6: Response rate on whether N-Power has helped establish sustainable business and employment opportunities for N-Power beneficiaries

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	28	9.8%
Agree	41	14.4%
Disagree	166	58.3%
Strongly disagree	50	17.5%
Total	285	100%

Source: Field survey (2023).

The result in Table 6 reveals the response of respondents on whether N-Power has helped establish sustainable business and employment opportunities for N-Power beneficiaries. 216 (75.8%), a combination of strongly disagree and disagree, respondents indicated the programme did not assist them in establishing sustainable business and employment opportunities after disengagement from service, suggesting the scheme did not promote self-reliance, while 69 (24.2%), a combination of strongly agree and agree, respondents felt the programme did help set up their own businesses.

Hypotheses testing: T-test computation

The responses were recoded to give a numeric value and it was coded from 1 to 4, with strongly disagree (SD) scaled to 1, disagree (D) scaled to 2, agree (A) scaled to 3 while strongly agree (SA) was scaled to 4.

H: There is no significant relationship between the N-Power programme and human capacity development in Bida Local Government Area. The research questions were:

1. N-Power has helped in acquisition of entrepreneurial and technical skills for its beneficiaries.
2. N-Power has actualised the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged population.
3. N-Power has helped build Human Development Index in terms of health, education and standard of living among beneficiaries.
4. N-Power has helped establish sustainable business and employment opportunities for N-Power beneficiaries after disengagement from the scheme.

The responses to these questions were considered using the t-test and correlation ($P > 99$) to compare the effect of N-Power on poverty reduction in the community.

Table 7: N-Power beneficiaries' perception of its effects on human capacity development

Research questions	Recoded response Mean±SD	Percentage (%) spread			
		SD	D	A	SA
N-Power has helped in acquisition of entrepreneurial and technical skills for its beneficiaries.	1.74 ±0.955	52.6	30.5	7.4	9.5
N-Power has actualised the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged population.	2.73 ±1.124	19.6	21.4	25.7	33.3
N-Power has helped build Human Development Index in terms of health, education and standard of living among beneficiaries.	2.12 ±1.048	33.3	37.5	13.0	16.1
N-Power has helped establish sustainable business and employment opportunities for N-Power beneficiaries after disengagement from the scheme.	2.16 ±0.829	17.5	58.2	14.4	9.8

Source: Field survey (2023).

From Table 7 above, it was shown that 52.6% of respondents strongly disagree that N-Power has improved their entrepreneurial and technical skills, 30.5% of respondents disagreed that N-Power has improved their entrepreneurial and technical skills, 7.4% of respondents agreed that N-Power has improved their entrepreneurial and technical skills while 9.5% strongly agree that N-Power has increased their entrepreneurial and technical skills.

As part of human development, has N-Power actualised the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged population? From the table, 19.6% of the respondents strongly disagree that N-Power was able to actualise the target while 21.4% disagree that N-Power was able to actualise the target but 25.6% of the respondents agree that N-Power was able to reach the marginalised and disadvantaged population while 33.3% of the respondents strongly agree that N-Power was able to actualise the target of reaching the marginalised and disadvantaged.

Has N-Power helped build human development index in terms of health, education and standard of living among the beneficiaries? The responses indicated that 33.3% strongly disagree that N-Power has helped in building human development index while 37.5% disagreed that N-Power has helped build human development index in Bida Local Government, 13.0% agreed that N-Power was able to build human development index in terms of health and education and their standard of living while 16.1% strongly agreed that N-Power was able to build human development indices as reflected in education, health and general standard of living.

As shown in the table above, N-Power was able to allow beneficiaries to establish sustainable business and employment. 50 respondents making 17.5% of the population strongly disagree that N-Power was able to allow them to establish sustainable business and employment, 58.2% also disagree that N-Power was able to establish sustainable business and employment for them, while 14.4% of respondents agreed that N-Power allowed them to establish sustainable business and employment and 9.8% of respondents strongly agreed that N-Power was able to establish sustainable business and employment for them. The statistical analysis has shown that there is a significant difference ($p > 0.05$) and the responses showed there is no correlation between business establishment and N-Power; from the statistical analysis it has shown N-Power did not allow human capacity development.

Discussion

Impact of the N-Power programme in promoting human and sustainable development

Tables 3–6 answered the research question of this study. The findings of this study reveal that the N-Power programme did not significantly facilitate human and sustainable development for its beneficiaries, particularly in terms of acquiring entrepreneurial and technical skills. This contradicts the assertions of Ahmed (2025) and

Bisong (2019), who recorded improved entrepreneurial skills and better livelihoods among N-Power beneficiaries. However, our study's results align with Nwaobi's (2019) suggestion that the programme's impact on unemployment duration should be appraised in the short, medium, and long terms, as our findings indicate a lack of sustained economic outcomes.

Notably, the programme seemed to achieve its core aim of engaging youths living in poverty and needing capacity building, as most respondents affirmed that the scheme reached the marginalised and disadvantaged population. This supports Bisong's (2019) finding of a strong positive relationship between N-Power participation and economic inclusion among young people.

However, the programme's insignificant influence on beneficiaries' Human Development Index (HDI) in health, education, and standard of living is concerning. This finding diverges from Ahmed's (2025) assertion that practical skill acquisition can translate into empowerment and income generation, which should reduce poverty. The lack of proper exit packages or plans for beneficiaries before and after disengagement from the scheme likely contributed to the programme's limited impact on sustainable business and employment opportunities.

The study's results highlight critical weaknesses in translating the N-Power initiative's intentions into meaningful human development indicators and sustainable empowerment. This underscores the importance of re-evaluating the programme's design and implementation to ensure that it achieves its intended goals of promoting human and sustainable development among beneficiaries, and further indicates the pertinent need for more inclusive, longitudinal, and regionally diverse studies to assess the impact and sustainability of human development effects across Nigeria, as well as for deeper qualitative analysis to inform policy improvement. By doing so, N-Power and similar and future social investment programmes can have a more significant and lasting impact on the lives of people in Nigeria and beyond.

Conclusion

The paper examined the impact of the N-Power programme on human development in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the N-Power programme, to a reasonable extent, in spite of having a well-crafted design which focuses on human capital development as a means of achieving long-term development, failed to improve human development as the capacities of the participants involved in the scheme were not developed.

Recommendations

For developing nations, especially in Africa, to ensure speedy and lasting development, future social investment programmes designed to build entrepreneurial skills and human capacity should revolve around Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Actualising this will lead to having a quality and productive labour force, thereby creating employment opportunities which will in turn grow the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This will certainly ensure human and economic development. Also, adequate and paramount concentration should be vested in the area of vocational and technical skills training especially in the area of technology. Examples of such are the N-Power Tech and N-Power Build which would have contributed immensely to economic and national development.

Also, there is a complementary link between infrastructure and human capital development. There is a need for government to further develop the nation's physical infrastructure. Skilled personnel are needed during the construction and maintenance of these infrastructures. Also, trained or skilled personnel are also needed in the operational aspect of running these infrastructures, thereby serving as a ground floor for trained and untrained workforces to hone their skills. This leads to gaining of practical work experience, further generating income and employment opportunities for Nigerians. For example, the N-Build strand of the N-Power programme fits this narrative. In essence, the building of infrastructure (electricity, hospitals, markets, roads, industries, communication networks, schools) and efficient delivery of social services will create a conducive environment for the nation's trained manpower to make exploits, thereby improving the population quality and standard of living in the country.

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