

## Perceived effects of N-power agro programme on youth empowerment and income generation in Lagos state, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study examined the effect of N-power Agro program on youth empowerment and income generation in Lagos state, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to examine the socio-economic characteristics of N-power agro beneficiaries, to determine the contribution of N-Agro to empowerment, to ascertain how N-Power agro programme generates income for the youths and to know the problems affecting N-Power Agro programs in Lagos state. A three-stage sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty (120) respondents. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean and Analysis of Variance. The mean age of the respondents was 26 years, 55.0% were male, 50.8% were married and 42.5% were First Degree holders. Findings also revealed that 80.0% felt the programme has improved their working experience, 79.2% indicated that the programme has helped in poverty reduction while 62.5% perceived that the programme ensured their financial independence. The major problems affecting the implementation of N-Power Agro programmes in Lagos State are non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.92), insufficient information ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.68) and high transportation fare paid by the participants to work ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.63). The study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between N-Power Agro and youth empowerment in Lagos State. It is therefore recommended that government should ensure adequate provision of funds for income-generating projects through the N-Power programmes. This will solve the problem of delay in the payment of the stipend.

**Keywords:** Effect, Empowerment, N-power programme, Poverty alleviation, Youth

### Introduction

Poverty and unemployment remain one of the biggest social problems in Nigeria today (Asaju, 2014). Unemployment in Nigeria appears to be on consistent rise and it is seen to prevail among the working population being the youth. Available data shows that more than half of the Nigerian population is under the age of 35 years and a substantial percentage of this population is unemployed while a sizeable number of the youth are still under-employed (National Population Commission, 2013; National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). According to the World Bank (2019) estimates, the youth unemployment rate

in Nigeria was around 29.9%. This implies that unemployment has posed a serious threat to social and economic stability and is seemingly contributing to the high rate of poverty in the country (International Labour Organization, 2012; Ajufu, 2013; Department for International Development, 2017).

Nigeria, therefore, faces a precarious unemployment challenge that is taking a toll on its youth and future. Given the persistent unemployment, poverty and lack of means of income, various administrations in Nigeria have initiated different policies and programmes targeted at the reduction of unemployment and poverty but with no

tangible impact. Some of these programmes and policies are National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and Youth Enterprise with Innovative Ideas in Nigeria (You-WIN) programme among others.

Regrettably, the implementation of these commendable programme initiatives in Nigeria could not solve the problem of ever-increasing poverty and unemployment. Instead, unemployment and poverty keep increasing with marginal gaps from previous statistics. It is believed that the deteriorating unemployment and poverty situations in Nigeria have implications for the attendant socio-economic and security dislocations as exemplified by the high crime rate, kidnapping, militancy, insurgency, and terrorism (Kilishi, 2014).

In reaction to the endemic situation of unemployment and its perceived relationship with poverty and disempowerment, the Federal Government of Nigeria initiated a strategic plan known to be N-power in 2016 (DFID, 2017; N-Power Information guide, 2017). N-power programme is a National Social Investment Programme of the Federal Government targeted precisely at creating jobs and empowering youth via human capital development. In essence, one of the aims of the programme was to increase the human capital of the Nigerian labour force (N-Power Information Guide, 2017). The human capital boost seems to be in the area of youth employment which was intended to be addressed through youth empowerment. The N-power programme is envisioned to address a variety of social problems such as curbing the incidence of poverty, teeming youth unemployment, entrepreneurship orientation and increasing school enrolment (Akujuru and Enyioko, 2019). Moreso, youth empowerment was to be ensured through skill acquisition and development of youth in critical sectors such

as education, health and agriculture. The agricultural aspect of N-power programme is the N-Power Agro. The beneficiaries are meant to function as intermediaries between research and farmers. They operate as facilitators and communicators, helping farmers in their decision-making and ensuring that appropriate knowledge is implemented to obtain the best results on farms and also providing manpower in the area of agribusiness (Aderonmu, 2017).

Although, the N-power initiative, which is the job creation component of the policy aims at reducing poverty and unemployment and is targeted at the Nigerian youths, however, creating a policy and its implementation to achieve set goals appear to be mutually exclusive in the Nigerian context. Since the inception of the N-power programme, there have been claims on the part of the government about the success of the programme. These claims cannot be validated without subjecting it to empirical research by assessing the extent of the programme. There is therefore a need for independent research to show the effect of N-power Agro programme in tackling youth unemployment, empowering youth, generating income and subsequently reducing poverty. This study, therefore, intends to address this research gap by assessing the effects of N-power agro program on youth empowerment and income generation in Lagos state.

It is against this backdrop that the study was designed to specifically: determine the socio-economic characteristics of N-Power agro beneficiaries in Lagos State, determine the contribution of N-Agro to the empowerment of beneficiaries in Lagos State, ascertain if N-Power agro programme generates income for the youths in Lagos State and find out the problems affecting N-Power Agro programmes in Lagos State. Hypothesis of the study were stated that there is no significant relationship between N-Power Agro program and youth empowerment and that

there is no significant relationship between N-Agro programme and income generated by beneficiaries in Lagos State.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in Lagos state. Lagos State is a state in South-Western Nigeria. Of the 36 states, it is both the most populated and smallest in terms of land mass. Statistics from 2006 National Census showed that the state has a population of 9,013,534. However, based on the UN-Habitat and International development agencies' estimates, Lagos state is said to have a population of about 24.6 million in 2015. It is bounded to the south by the Bight of Benin and to the west by the international border with Benin Republic, Lagos State borders Ogun State to the east and north. This makes the state the only Nigerian state to border only one other state. Geographically, the state is dominated by bodies of water with nearly a quarter of the state's area being lagoons, creeks, and rivers, lying approximately on longitude 20 42'E and 32 2'E respectively and between latitude 60 22'N and 60 2'N. Its territorial extent and political jurisdiction encompass the city of Lagos and the four administrative divisions of Ikeja, Epe, Ikorodu and Badagry. The state has about 10,130 beneficiaries consisting of the different aspects on the programme (Lagos state Government official, 2022).

The research design used for this study is the survey research method which is commonly referred to as the selection of representative samples whose analysis can be readily generalized. The choice of the survey method (quasi experimental) design is because it gives the researcher freedom to have a first-hand information on the study and allows him the option of generalizing his findings

The population for the study consisted of all N-power Agro beneficiaries in Lagos State, Nigeria while a three-stage sampling technique

was used to select sample for the study. The first stage involved purposive selection of two batches (Batch A and Batch B) from the three batches involved in the programme (Batch A, Batch B and Batch C). The choice of Batch A and Batch B was due to the fact that these are the batches that have completed their two-years N-power programme. The second involved the random selection of 5 local government area out of the 20 available local government in the study area. The selected local government were Agege, Alimosho, Oshodi Isolo, Mushin and Ikeja. The third stage involved the use of cluster random sampling technique to select 60 beneficiaries in Batch A and 60 beneficiaries in Batch B making a total of 120 respondents. These beneficiaries were only selected from N-power Agro programme. The researchers went to the place where the beneficiaries were having their NEXIT Entrepreneurship training (training for beneficiaries about to exit the programme) to collect the data.

This study made use of only primary sources in form of a structured questionnaire in obtaining the necessary data for the research. Descriptive statistical method was employed to examine the socio-economic characteristics of N-Power agro beneficiaries in Lagos state. Four-point rating scale was used to assess the problem faced by the beneficiaries while a five-point Likert type scale was used to perceived effects of N-Agro on empowerment and income generation of beneficiaries in Lagos State. Analysis of variance (Anova) was used to test the hypothesis.

### **Measurement of Dependent Variable**

Beneficiaries' perception of N-power Agro programme on youth empowerment and income generation is the dependent variable of this study. Their perception was measured by constructing a 5-point Likert type scale that ranged from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Each beneficiary provided their

perception by checking against ten statements.

### **Measurement of Independent Variable**

The independent variables of this study which influenced the respondents' perception were gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, household size, educational status and monthly income and problems faced by the beneficiaries. Gender was measured at nominal level with scores assigned to Male and Female. Age of the beneficiary was measured in terms of actual age in years of respondents at interval level of measurement. Marital status was measured at nominal level with scores assigned to Married, Single, Widow/Widower and Divorced/Separated. Ethnicity was measured at nominal level with scores assigned as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Household size was measured as actual age in years of respondents at interval level of measurement. Npower training was measured at nominal level with scores assigned as Yes and No while Income generated was measured in actual monthly income in Naira (₦). A four-point rating scale was used for computing the problem score of a respondent. The respondents were given four alternative responses ("high", "medium", "low", and "not at all") for each of the selected problems. Scores was assigned to those alternative responses as: "High" = 3, "Medium" = 2, "Low" = 1, and "Not at all" = 0, respectively.

### **Results and Discussion**

Table 1 revealed that slightly more than half of the beneficiaries were male (55%). This implies that both male and female beneficiaries are well represented in the programme. This finding does not conform with the findings of Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) who studied the impact of N-power programme on poverty alleviation and found male beneficiaries dominating the composition of N-power programme. Results in Table 1 also indicated that mean age of the beneficiaries is 26 years.

The youthfulness of the beneficiaries is due to the criteria of application into the N-power agro programme scheme which states that all applicant must be within the age range of 22 – 35 years old. This affirmed the assertion of Odey and Sambe (2019) in their study on the assessment of the contribution of N-power agro programme to youth empowerment which indicated that most of the N-Power beneficiaries were in the age bracket of 27 – 29 years.

Half (50.8%) of the beneficiaries sampled for the study were married while 48.3% of the beneficiaries were single (Table 1). This implies that beneficiaries in the study area marry at young age thereby assuming responsibilities at early stage of their life. The finding negates that of Ifatimehin *et al.* (2020) which posited that majority of N-power beneficiaries are single. Moreso, that 65.8% of the beneficiaries sampled for the study were Yoruba, 30% of the respondents are Igbo while 4.2% of the beneficiaries are Hausa. Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) stated that the location where a study is carried out impacts the percentage of a group involvement in N-power agro programme which implies that in the north there would more Hausa involvement, in the West ~~South~~ there would more Yoruba involvement and in the East there would more Igbo involvement.

Furthermore, 42.5% of the beneficiaries were first degree holders while only 17.5% had postgraduate education. This shows that most of the beneficiaries are First Degree holder. The high literacy rate among the beneficiaries may be attributed to fact that N-Power Programmes criteria states that an applicant must be a degree holder. This finding is in conformity with the assertion made by Olufemi *et al.*, (2020) who reported the largest percentage of beneficiaries in their study are first degree holders. However, the household size of the respondents indicates that more than half of the beneficiaries (57.5%) had small

family size within 2 – 4. The mean household size of the respondents is 5. This is not surprising given that most of the beneficiaries were graduate youths who may be newly married and are still in their productive stage hence, the reason for the few numbers of persons in the household. This result gives credibility to the study conducted by Adeyanju

(2017) that had similar findings where the mean household size of the respondents' is 5.

The mean monthly income of beneficiaries before N-power was ₦13,941 while the mean monthly income during N-power was ₦30,125. This implies that most of the beneficiaries had little or low income before joining the programme.

**Table 1: Selected socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries**

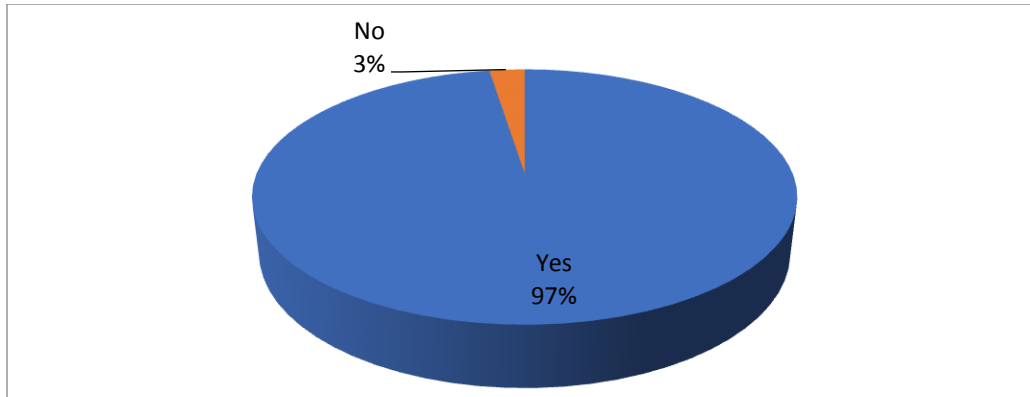
Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	66	55.0	
Female	54	45.0	
<b>Age</b>			
21 – 25	54	45.0	
26 – 30	61	50.8	
31 – 35	5	4.1	26.1
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	58	48.3	
Married	61	50.8	
Widowed	1	0.8	
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Hausa	5	4.2	
Igbo	36	30.0	
Yoruba	79	65.8	
<b>Educational Status</b>			
OND/NCE	48	40.0	
First Degree	51	42.5	
Postgraduate	21	17.5	
<b>Household size</b>			
2 – 4	69	57.5	
5 – 7	47	39.1	
> 7	4	3.3	4.6
<b>Monthly income before N-Power (₦)</b>			
0 – 10,000	14	11.6	
11,000 – 20,000	103	85.4	
121,000 – 30,000	3	2.5	13,941

**Source:** Field Survey Data, 2022

### **Participation in Training during the Npower Agro programme**

Figure 1 reveals that majority 97.5% of the beneficiaries sampled for the study attended the N-Power training while 2.5% of the beneficiaries did not attend any training.

This implies that almost all the beneficiaries underwent training. The modular programs under N-Power ensured that each participant is trained (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2018).



**Figure 1: Respondents' Response on Training Attendance**

**Source:** Field Survey Data, 2022

**Perceived effects of N-Agro on empowerment and income generation of beneficiaries in Lagos State**

Table 2 showed the perceived effect of N-power agro programme among beneficiaries' empowerment and income generation in the study area. A large proportion of the respondents strongly agreed that the major effects of N-power agro on empowerment and income generation as perceived by them were “reduce poverty (79.2%)”, “improve working experience (80.0%)”, “employment generation (64.2%)”, “financial independence (62.5%)”

and “business set up (56.7%)”. It can be deduced that the N-Power agro programme has made positive impact to youth empowerment and income generation in the study area since empowerment could be seen in the light of poverty reduction, financial independence and ability to control one's destiny through increase in knowledge or skills. The above findings corroborate a study by Abin (2018) who examined the impact of N-Power Programme on socio-economic lives of beneficiaries in Akwanga Metropolis of Nasarawa state.

**Table 2: Perceived effects of N-Agro on empowerment and income generation of**

Perceived Effects	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Reduce poverty	95 (79.2)	17 (14.2)	3 (2.5)	2 (1.7)	3 (2.5)
Financial independence	75 (62.5)	34 (28.3)	4 (3.3)	7 (5.8)	-
Improve working experience	80 (66.7)	33 (27.5)	7 (5.8)	-	-
Skills Development	63 (52.5)	21 (17.5)	11 (9.2)	24 (20.0)	1 (0.8)
Business set-up	68 (56.7)	26 (21.7)	15 (12.5)	9 (7.5)	2 (1.7)
Employment generation	77 (64.2)	35 (29.2)	8 (6.7)	-	-
ICT proficiency	37 (30.8)	53 (44.2)	15 (12.5)	11 (9.2)	4 (3.3)
Increase of own productive asset	40 (33.3)	23 (19.2)	36 (30.0)	17 (14.2)	4 (3.3)
Improve savings	11 (9.2)	33 (27.5)	25 (20.8)	35 (29.2)	16 (33.3)
Increase social interaction	22 (18.3)	43 (35.8)	23 (19.2)	23 (19.2)	9 (7.5)

**beneficiaries**

**Source:** Field Survey Data, 2022

**Problems encountered by the beneficiaries of N-Power programme in Lagos state**

Table 3 showed the major problems encountered by the N-power agro beneficiaries in their participation in the programme. Non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due ( $\bar{x}$ =2.92) ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, insufficient information ( $\bar{x}$ =2.68) ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, high transportation fare paid by the participants to work ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.63) ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> while short life span of the programme (2.62) ranked 4<sup>th</sup>. This implies that the two most important problems confronting N-power beneficiaries in the study area is non-payment of stipends as at when due and inadequate access to sufficient information about issues relating to the program. Some beneficiaries reported ~~revealed that is always~~ late payment of their stipends while others said they do not get their stipends until after three months. This therefore discourages them from going to their place of posting and subsequently affect their ability to discharge their work effectively and efficiently. Moreso, some beneficiaries complained that they do not know the next line of action especially at the

onset of the programme due to insufficient information which made the process very stressful for them. Furthermore, some of the beneficiaries were posted to very far places from the place of residence therefore, making the cost of transportation high. Also, the programme has a life span of two years and so, after the first year, beneficiaries tend to be lackadaisical in their attitude to work as they begin to search for more permanent job offers.

Similar to this finding is that of Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) who mentioned non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due and insufficient information as major problems affecting the implementation of N-Power programmes towards poverty alleviation in Rivers State. In line with this finding is also that of Odey and Sambe (2019) that listed the challenges faced by the programme in empowerment of youth which included delay in payment of allowance, unpaid allowances, distance to working places and teacher training for most of N-Teach beneficiaries.

**Table 3: Participants response on problems affecting N-Power Agro programmes in Lagos state (n=120)**

Statement	High	Medium	Low	Not at all	Mean	Ranking
Non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due	25 (20.8)	68 (56.7)	18 (15.0)	9 (7.5)	2.92	1 <sup>st</sup>
Insufficient information	15 (12.5)	62 (51.7)	33 (27.5)	10 (8.3)	2.68	2 <sup>nd</sup>
High transportation fare paid by the participants to work	28 (23.3)	36 (30.0)	40 (33.3)	16 (13.3)	2.63	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Short life span of the programme	18 (15.0)	50 (41.7)	40 (33.3)	12 (10.0)	2.62	4 <sup>th</sup>
Overbearing hands of politicians in the Programme	24 (20.0)	38 (31.7)	44 (36.7)	16 (13.3)	2.60	5 <sup>th</sup>
Poor funding of the programme	12 (10.0)	52 (43.3)	51 (42.5)	5 (4.2)	2.59	6 <sup>th</sup>
Inability to do inter-state transfer	19 (15.8)	43 (35.8)	44 (36.7)	14 (11.7)	2.56	7 <sup>th</sup>
Website and internet hiccups	13 (10.8)	52 (43.3)	41 (34.2)	14 (11.7)	2.53	8 <sup>th</sup>
Doing activities not related to agriculture	10 (8.3)	48 (40.0)	44 (36.7)	18 (15.0)	2.42	9 <sup>th</sup>

**Source:** Field Survey Data, 2022

**Hypothesis testing**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between N-Agro programme and youth empowerment of beneficiaries in Lagos State.

The result of analysis as presented in Table 4 revealed that the critical value of 2.725 is greater than 0.047. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This implies that N-Power Agro

programme significantly contributed to the empowerment of the beneficiaries in the study area. This finding is similar to that of Bisong (2019), whose study on the impact of N-power scheme concluded that the N-Power programme has significantly created employment among youths in Bekwara Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Table 4: ANOVA analysis on relationship between N-Agro programme and youth empowerment of beneficiaries in Lagos State.**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	12.981	3	4.327	2.725	.047	S
Within Groups	184.197	116	1.587			
Total	197.178	119				

**Source:** Field Survey Data, 2022

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between N-Agro programme and income generated by beneficiaries in Lagos State.

Table 5 revealed that the critical value of 4.419 is greater than 0.043. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis hence, there is a significant relationship between N-Power Agro

program and income generated by youths in Lagos State. Similarly, the study of Odey and Sambe (2019) examined the impact of N-power on youth empowerment in Cross River State, Nigeria found that the N-power scheme significantly contribute to poverty reduction, financial empowerment and skill development.

**Table 5: ANOVA analysis on the Impact of N-Power Agro program on income generated by youths.**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	10.608	3	3.536	4.419	.043	S
Within Groups	76.818	116	0.662			
Total	87.426	119				

**Source:** Field Survey Data, 2022

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that N-Power programme has made positive impact to youth empowerment in the study area since empowerment could be seen in the light of poverty reduction, financial independence and ability to control one’s destiny through increase in knowledge or skills. The contribution of N-Power to empowerment of youth in the study area included poverty reduction, improved working

experience, employment generation, financial independence and setting up of small-scale businesses amongst others. The most important problems encountered by beneficiaries in Lagos state are non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due, insufficient information, high transportation fare paid by the participants to work and short life span of the programme. In lieu of these, the following recommendation were derived from this study:  
 a. There is the need for an agreed poverty

reduction agenda that can be used by all stakeholders be it Federal Government, State Government, Local Governments, NGOs and the International Donor Community.

- b. Finance is the live wire of every successful organization. Therefore, government should ensure adequate provision of funds for income generating projects through the N-Power programmes. This will solve the problem of delay in the payment of the stipend.
- c. Government should introduce mandatory training and workshops in areas such as ICT and agriculture for volunteers to increase their employability after the expiration of the scheme.
- d. Banks should provide interest free loans or grants to interested volunteers to start up their small or medium scale enterprises. This can be conveniently deducted from their monthly stipends.
- e. Pressures should be put on organization where the beneficiaries worked especially those owned by the state and local governments to absorb some of the volunteers into a more permanent job position in view of the fact that short life span of the programme is one of the major problems affecting the beneficiaries.

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