IMPACT OF N-POWER SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (NSIP) ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN ADO - EKITI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI STATE

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the impact of N-power social investment programme (NSIP) on youth unemployment in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Other objectives of the study included to determine the impact of NSIP on the capacity building of youths; and the challenges in the implementation of the programme. For this study, 200 N-power beneficiaries were sampled, using simple random sampling technique. Survey research design was adopted for the study. An Assessment of N-power Programme Questionnaires (ANPQ) was used for data collection. The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the NSIP has significantly led to more jobs creation; the possibility for a post-NSIP employment for the beneficiaries is high; and youths, through the NSIP, have acquired specialised skill(s) for capacity development. The findings also revealed that the challenges facing the implementation of the N-power are: Poor organisation of the verification exercise; low remunerative offerings to beneficiaries; disproportionate tie between the resident and deployment locations of some beneficiaries; and poor supervision of beneficiaries. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that renumeration of beneficiaries should be reviewed to boost the level of job motivation and work productivity. Also, government should seek private sector partnership for financing and training of the beneficiaries.

KEYWORDS: Impact, N-power social investment programme, Youth unemployment

INTRODUCTION
Unemployment is a global challenge faced by most countries, though it is worse in the developing countries of the world. Unemployment is a situation where persons aged 15-64 years that should make up the labour force, are available for work but are without work (ILO in National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2018). Unemployed persons comprise those that absolutely do nothing and those that work for less than 20 hours per week. Unemployment among the educated and the uneducated manpower has become one of the most topical and thorny issues in contemporary Nigeria. The typical Nigerian unemployment situation is abysmal. Between year 2005 and 2019, unemployment rate increased from 11.9% to 23.1% (Akinyemi, Ofem & Ikuenomore, 2012) (which accounts for 20.9 million unemployed persons in the 3rd quarter (Q3) of 2018; NBS, 2018). Worse still, is the conspicuous problem of youth
unemployment in Nigeria. The total youth (working population below 34 years) unemployment rate is 29.7% (which is tantamount to 13.1 million youths). Youths, upon graduation, take an average of 2 – 3 years for job-seeking. This can be corroborated with the fact that 79.6 percent of unemployed adults have been so for 3 years or less. According to Akinyemi et al. (2012), 619,097 graduates were churned out, as at year 2005, from Nigerian tertiary institutions. In addition to that, unemployment rate of 29.8% by educational grouping was highest for persons with tertiary school certificates (NBS, 2018). The confidence level of an educated youth being gainfully employed in 12 months upon graduation is low. Out of 9.7 million people who did absolutely nothing, 90.1% are looking for their first job. Also, Nigerian streets are littered with youth hawkers who ordinarily should have found gainful employment in some enterprises. The self-employed graduates are in quandary as deplorable infrastructure and paltry funding that stunts or at times stifles their businesses growth, ostensibly, makes entrepreneurship an insidious alternative to job-seeking.

Abundant truth exists in the saying that a large number of Nigerians are insistently trapped in unemployment and poverty transmitted from generation to generation. Despite the 7.8% marginal annual economic growth rate captured in 2010, the poverty profile of Nigeria has not improved (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics NBS, 2018). NBS puts Nigeria’s poverty rate at 69% meaning that over two-thirds of Nigerians are still living in extreme poverty. The employee benefits in the oil sectors and others, like telecommunication, finance and insurance have adversely affected the motivation level for seeking employments in the traditional sectors such as Agriculture (Olaiya, 2016). Consequently, this leads to a growing level of urban poverty and the pauperisation of the other sectors. This analysis shows that growth experienced in the past decade has neither produced any improvement in job provisions nor reduction in the level of poverty and income inequality.

As stated earlier, the International Labour Organization (2007) described unemployment as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but are available for and seeking work. These include people who have lost their jobs, and those who have voluntarily left work. Unemployment occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought for within four weeks. Fajana (2000) referred to unemployment as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. Abefe-Balogun and Nwankpa (2012) defined unemployment as a situation in which people who are capable of working and who are qualified by age to work but cannot find employment. It is a situation in which people who are capable of working in a wage employment or self-employment, and who are qualified by age to work legally, cannot secure employment. Such employment can be permanent, contractual or part-time in nature.
Unemployment problem in Nigeria is a hydra-headed phenomenon going by its many-sided nature. Though unemployment has become a global phenomenon of the 21st century, the problem is becoming more enormous each passing year in Nigeria. Unemployment and underemployment characterise the Nigerian labour market. This has been compounded by the alarming rate that is geometric in progression at which tertiary institutions, such as monotechnics, polytechnics and universities, churn out school leavers into the labour market. This has an impact on the increasing rate of social vices like robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, human trafficking, child abuse and unfair labour practices that are commonly perpetrated and mostly experienced by the unemployed youths.

In the 1970s, employment opportunities used to abound for graduates from colleges, polytechnics and universities. Undergraduates used to be interviewed for jobs at their final year. Some used to have more than two or three jobs awaiting them they were only vacillating amongst choices in those good old days as employment was practically automatic, upon graduation. As a societal norm, then in Ekiti, an evidence of being a fresh graduate is portrayed as a home-coming with a brand new car and an appointment letter at workplace. Today, the stories have changed as it appears that there is marked disconnection between the world of work and the school output.

In Nigeria, various policies have been initiated and implemented by the government, at Federal, State and Local levels, in a bid to correct certain perceived negligence of youth unemployment. Of all the government policies instituted to address unemployment among youths, the N-power social investment programme (NSIP) initiated by the present administration of President Muhammad Buhari is efficacious. However, there is a need to assess the level of impact of the NSIP on youth unemployment and to evaluate the gap(s) between its expected outcome and its current performance in Nigeria and, limited by the scope of this study, in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State.

Studies have established that there is a positive relationship between job creation and the empowerment of the segment of the population which include women, youths and the poor if the right policies are institutionalised (Oluremi & Agboola, 2011). Public policy is the government’s actions or inactions towards tackling certain issues in a society. It is the formulation of what is to be done by government and the monitoring of whether this (these) task (tasks) is (are) actually done or not. It is important to note that the NSIP as matter of fact can be regarded as public policy or palliative measure designed to address certain perceived problems of unemployment, poverty and low capacity of youths in Nigeria.

The NSIP is a post-tertiary engagement initiative for Nigerians jobless youths between 18 and 35 years. It is a paid volunteering 2–year programme that is coordinated by office of
the Vice President. The programme aims at providing jobless youths with the requisite skills and experience needed for them to transcend from unemployment to employment and from job-seeking to job-creating. The beneficiaries undertake their primary tasks in identified public services within their proximate communities. The programme comprises different tracks namely: N-power Teach, N-power Health, N-power Tech, N-power Agro, N-power Build, N-power Creative and N-power Tax. The beneficiaries are paid a monthly stipend of N30,000 during their period of engagement. In 2016, the Federal Government engaged 200,000 N-power beneficiaries; in 2018, the Federal Government enlisted an additional 300,000 (Premium Times, 2018). There has been no detailed study aimed at assessing the level of success or impact of the programme. Hence, this study examined the impact of the NSIP on youth unemployment in Ado-Ekiti LGA, Ekiti State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While the NSIP aims at addressing the endemic nature of unemployment among the Nigerian youths, the ever-growing army of jobless youths who are both frustrated and desperate poses a major threat to development. Largely, unemployed youths tend to be agents of anti-social activities such as political thuggery, communal crisis (conflicts), armed robbery, terrorism, prostitution, internet fraud, ritual killings, insurgency, kidnapping, drug and human trafficking, syndicates impersonation, document racketeering, among other vices. The promulgators of the NSIP view youths as an asset and a creative force rather than a problem. Since its inception in 2016, the programme has successfully engaged over 500,000 youths. Yet, there has been no coherent study aimed at assessing the methods adopted for implementing the programme, as well as at evaluating the extent to which the programme has achieved its set goal of reducing unemployment, and at analysing the possible challenges militating against its smooth implementation, hence this study was carried out to find out the aforementioned.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The stated observations have attracted the attention of this researcher to investigate the impact of the N-power social investment programme on youth unemployment. The study was carried out with three objectives of finding out the:

1. effects of the NSIP on reduction of youth unemployment;
2. impact of the NSIP on capacity building of the youth; and
3. challenges in the implementation of the NSIP in Ado-Ekiti LGA, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions addressed the research problem.

1. What are the effects of the NSIP on the reduction of youth unemployment?
2. What are the impacts of the NSIP on the capacity building of the Youth?
3. What are the challenges facing the implementation of the NSIP in Ado-Ekiti LGA, Ekiti State, Nigeria?

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

A descriptive survey design was adopted through the use of questionnaire which enabled the researcher to collect and analyse data from a sample of the entire population without any manipulations.

**POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 200 out of 770 N-power beneficiaries in Ado-Ekiti LGA of Ekiti State.

**INSTRUMENTATION**

A well-constructed and self-developed questionnaire titled “Assessment of N-power Programme Questionnaire (ANPQ)” was used to get the desired information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of respondents, section B consisted of twenty items to elicit information on the effects of the NSIP on the reduction of youth unemployment, the impacts of the NSIP on capacity building of the youth and the challenges facing its implementation. Seven items elicited information on its effects on the reduction of youth unemployment, six items on its impacts on the capacity building of youths and seven items on the challenges facing its implementation, respectively. In section B, the level of varied responses was measured by providing the following options for selection: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The face and content validity were ascertained by giving the designed questionnaire (ANPQ) to experts of Tests and Measurement for vetting before distributing it to the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the test-retest method. A trial test was carried out outside the sampled area. The instrument was administered on twenty respondents while the data collected on the two tests were correlated using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation statistics which yielded a co-efficient of 0.86.

**DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

The researcher personally administered the instrument in the Local Government Area sampled in the study. In analysing the data, the researcher used simple percentage, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions raised. For decision making, a mean score of 2.50 was used as the criterion mean. Any item that attained a response mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted while a lower mean score was not accepted.
RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the effects of NSIP on reduction of youth unemployment?

Table 1: Effects of NSIP on Youth Unemployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>µ</th>
<th>σ</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>NSIP has significantly led to creation of more jobs</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>NSIP has significantly reduced the rate of youth’s unemployment</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>NSIP is a great opportunity for fresh graduates to save money for personal business</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>There is high chance of selection of the applicants of the NSIP.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>NSIP beneficiaries are entitled to receive credit device facility under the scheme</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>NSIP is an avenue for unemployed youths to be engaged with a job</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>NSIP is an avenue for unemployed youths to have job experience related to their career</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N – number of respondents; µ - mean; σ – standard deviation

Table 1 shows the effects of the NSIP on the reduction of youth unemployment. The following items with the respective mean and standard deviation values were accepted: 1 (µ – 2.56; σ – 0.52), 4 (µ – 2.86; σ – 0.53); 5 (µ – 3.04; σ – 0.65) and 6 (µ – 2.66; σ – 0.60). Therefore, the respondents ascertained respectively that, to a moderate extent, the NSIP significantly led to the creation of more jobs; that the possibility that applicants will be recruited for the NSIP is high; that the NSIP beneficiaries are entitled to receive credit device facility under the scheme; and that the NSIP is an avenue for employment for the unemployed youths.

Owing to the fact that the following items had means lower than 2.5, they were, however, not accepted: 2 (µ – 2.03; σ – 0.69), 3 (µ – 2.19; σ – 0.65), and 7 (µ – 2.41; σ – 0.69). Thus, the decision level depicts respectively that the NSIP has not significantly reduced the rate of youth’s unemployment; that the NSIP is not, for fresh graduates, a source of capital accrual for a start-up (business); and that the NSIP is not an avenue for unemployed youths to have job experience related to their career.

Research Question Two: What are the impacts of the NSIP on capacity building of the youth?
Table 2: Impacts of the NSIP on the Capacity Building of Youths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>µ</th>
<th>σ</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>NSIP has significantly improved youths’ professional skills</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Youths have acquired specialized skills via the NSIP for the improvement of their capacity</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The NSIP develops character and competence</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>NSIP encompasses specialized vocation acquisition</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>NSIP involves necessary physiological and psychological training</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>NSIP helps to equip youths with relevant technical skills to become innovators</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N – number of respondents; µ - mean; σ – standard deviation

Table 2 shows the impacts of N-power social investment programme on capacity building of the youth. Out of six items, only three items were accepted, with the respective means and standard deviations, namely: 1 (µ – 2.79; σ – 0.59), 2 (µ – 2.81; σ – 0.60), and 6 (µ – 2.63; σ – 0.61). It can be inferred that the N-power has significantly improved youths’ professional skill; that youths have acquired, the NSIP, specialized skills for their capacity development; and that the NSIP empowers and equips youths with relevant technical skills to for innovation.

Items 3 (µ – 1.86; σ – 0.72), 4 (µ – 1.92; σ – 0.71), and 5 (µ – 1.64; σ – 0.73) were rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the NSIP does not develop character and competence; that the NSIP does not encompass specialized vocation acquisition; and that the NSIP does not involve physiological and psychological training.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges facing the implementation of the NSIP in Ado-Ekiti LGA, Ekiti State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Challenges Facing the Implementation of the NSIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>µ</th>
<th>σ</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The registration exercise is too stressful</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The verification exercise seems not to be well organized</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The monthly stipend given to beneficiaries is too small</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Some beneficiaries are deployed to a place far away from their location</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The temporary nature of the scheme affects the commitment of the beneficiaries</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Poor supervision of beneficiaries</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Discrimination between N-power beneficiaries and main staff in place of engagement</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N – number of respondents; µ - mean; σ – standard deviation
Table 3 shows the challenges facing the implementation of N-power. Based on the fact that the mean scores of following items are above 2.50, their statements are accepted as being valid: 2 (µ – 3.07; σ – 0.59), 3(µ – 3.24; σ – 0.58), 4 (µ – 2.53; σ – 0.71) and 6 (µ – 2.84; σ – 0.69). The veracity of the statements that the verification exercises is not well organised; that the monthly stipend given to beneficiaries is meagre; and that some beneficiaries are deployed to non-proximate locations; and that beneficiaries are poorly supervised.

But, the items 1 (µ – 2.39; σ – 0.72), 5 (µ – 1.99; σ – 0.73), and 7 (µ – 2.23; σ – 0.73) were rejected due to lower mean scores. Since this is so, then, the registration exercises are too stressful; the temporary nature of the scheme affects the commitment of the beneficiaries; and there is discrimination between the NSIP beneficiaries and the main staff in place of engagement. It can be concluded that the challenges facing the implementation of N-power are poor organisation of the verification exercises, low remuneration for beneficiaries, disproportionate tie between the resident and deployment locations of some beneficiaries, and poor supervision of beneficiaries.

DISCUSSION

With reference to the first research question which dealt with the effects of N-power social investment programme on reduction of youth unemployment. The respondents agreed that the effects of NSIP on youth unemployment has significantly led to creation of more jobs, there is high possibility that applicants will be recruited, NSIP beneficiaries are entitled to receive credit device facility under the scheme, and it is an avenue for unemployed youths to be engaged with a job. This result was substantiated with the responses of other key informants during the interview sessions, where majority of them contended that the introduction of N-power social investment, has been very helpful in creation of jobs, but has not reduced youth unemployment in Nigeria.

With reference to the second research question which dealt with the impacts of N-power social investment programme on capacity building of the youth, the respondents agreed that the impacts of N-power on capacity building of the youths have improved youths’ professional skills, youths have acquired specialized skills via N-power for the improvement of their capacity, and it helps to equip youths with relevant technical skills to become innovators. On the third research question, that dealt with challenges facing the implementation of N-power social investment programme. The respondents agreed that challenges facing implementation of N-power are verification exercises which seem not to be well organized, the monthly stipend given to beneficiaries is too small, some beneficiaries are deployed to a place far away from their location, and poor supervision of beneficiaries.
CONCLUSION

From the findings, the study concluded that the effects of the N-power social investment programme on reduction of youth unemployment has significantly led to creation of more jobs. Also, the impacts of the NSIP on capacity building of the youth has significantly improved youths’ professional skills youths have acquired specialized skills through the NSIP for the improvement of their capacity. In addition to this, the programme equips youths with relevant technical skills to become innovators. Lastly, the study concluded that the challenges facing the implementation of NSIP are the poor organisation of verification exercises, paltry remuneration for beneficiaries reduces job motivation level, non-proximate distances from residence to work exacerbates stress and is cost and time ineffective thereby, reducing work productivity, and poor supervision of beneficiaries leads to work performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the following findings, it is hereby recommended that:

1. The monthly allowance being paid to beneficiaries should be reviewed for an increment in order to increase the level of job motivation among the beneficiaries particularly, youths.

2. The NSIP should be totally supported, and expanded for continued promotion of employable skills and leadership training aimed at empowering youth for self-employment (or may be entrepreneurship) or securing a gainful job, so as not only to banish poverty and hunger but also to minimise or expunge crime.

3. Government should seek for the partnership of the private sector for financing and training of the beneficiaries; this can be achieved by reaching an agreement with the private firms to accept the posting of some beneficiaries.

4. Government should ensure that the beneficiaries of the programme awarded (even certificates of participation that endorses their acquired specialised skills) after the two years’ mandatory programme; this will go a long way in adding some values and sense of belonging to the beneficiaries.

REFERENCES


