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Youth Empowerment And Their Impact On Unemployment And Poverty Reduction In Yobe State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of youth empowerment programmes on unemployment and poverty reduction in Yobe state. The study employed research survey design, which involved comprehensive and detailed act of obtaining data from the mapped area and exploring the relationship between the youth empowerment program; and unemployment and poverty reduction in Yobe state. To gather data for the survey report, the administration of questionnaire was carried out on targeted respondents. The study geographical area was Yobe state. Selected local governments from each-three political zones (Zone A, B and C) of the state where sampled for data collection. The questionnaires were designed to assess the youth empowerment strategies in the state; and the relationship between youth empowerment programmes; and unemployment and poverty reduction in the study area. Data analysis was conducted using percentages and chi-square test to test the research hypotheses. The findings reveal a significant relationship between youth empowerment programme; and unemployment and poverty reduction in the state. The study concludes with recommendation that both government and non-governmental organization should ensure effective monitoring, assessments and evaluation framework to track the progress and the challenges of youth empowerment program in the state.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, Unemployment Reduction, Poverty reduction

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth Empowerments in Yobe State aims at providing young people with the skills and opportunities needed for gainful employment, thereby reducing the likelihood of poverty. In Yobe State, Youth Empowerment Scheme is one of the flagship programs that offer vocational training in trades such as tailoring, carpentry, and information and communication technology (ICT). This initiative aims to enhance the employability of young people and foster entrepreneurship, which is seen as a proactive approach to mitigate the socio-economic conditions that often lead to poverty.

One of the critical challenges faced by youth empowerment programs in Yobe State is the issue of funding that limits the scope and effectiveness of youth empowerment programs. Many of these programs rely heavily on government funding, which is often insufficient to meet the needs of all participants. The

lack of adequate funding not only restricts the number of youths who can benefit from these programs but also affects the quality of training and support provided. While youth empowerment program in Yobe state are successful in many respects, it has struggled with limited resources, which has constrained its ability to reach more young people and expand its offerings.

This research examines the impact of youth empowerment on unemployment and poverty reduction in Yobe State.

Statement of Problem

Youth empowerment seeks to address the issues of unemployment and poverty by equipping young people with skills, resources, and motivation to improve their lives. This involves enhancing access to opportunities that can alter their beliefs, values, and attitudes for the better. Stakeholders such as governments, NGOs, and international organizations should assess youth conditions to develop effective empowerment policies and programs. Successful youth empowerment initiatives can significantly enhance youths' quality of life and foster positive societal change.

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, faces challenges in youth empowerment. Despite being endowed with vast natural and human resources, Nigeria grapples with high youth unemployment, poverty, and social inequality. The Nigerian government has implemented various youth empowerment schemes and policies to address these issues, including the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), N-Power program, and YouWin initiative among others.

While there are numerous youth empowerment initiatives in Yobe State, their impact on unemployment and poverty reduction has not been systematically assessed. There is a dearth of comprehensive studies that analyze the effectiveness of these programs in reducing unemployment and poverty alleviation in Yobe state. This research work examines the impact of Youth Empowerment on Unemployment and poverty reduction in Yobe state.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Assess the impact of youth empowerment on unemployment reduction in Yobe State.
2. Investigate the impact of youth empowerment poverty reduction in Yobe State.

Research Question

1. Is there any significant relationship between youth empowerment programmes and unemployment reduction among youth in Yobe State?
2. What is the relationship between youth empowerment programmes and poverty reduction among youth in Yobe State?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between youth empowerment programmes and unemployment reduction among youths in Yobe State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between youth empowerment programmes and poverty reduction among youths in Yobe State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Youth Empowerment, Unemployment and Poverty

Youth empowerment

Youth empowerment can be conceptualized as a multidimensional process that enables young people to gain control over their lives, influence the decisions that affect them, and acquire the skills and competencies needed to participate fully in society (Bennett, 2018). Empowerment involves economic, social, psychological, and political dimensions, and is often facilitated through education, vocational training, entrepreneurship programs, and civic engagement activities (Zimmerman, 1995).

Youth empowerment has been a prominent topic in global development literature for several decades, emphasizing its critical role in fostering individual and societal progress. Education and skill development are often highlighted as fundamental components of empowerment, with organizations like UNESCO and the World Bank documenting how access to quality education enhances critical thinking, employ- ability, and economic independence. Economic empowerment through job opportunities and entrepreneurship is

another key theme, as studies from the International Labour Organization (ILO) demonstrate the significant impact of decent work on reducing poverty and deterring youth from engaging in criminal activities. Civic engagement and leadership have also been extensively explored, with the United Nations and scholarly articles in the Journal of Youth Studies emphasizing how involving young people in governance and community service contributes to democratic processes and societal stability.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a term referring to individuals who are employable and actively seeking a job but are unable to find a job. Included in this group are those people in the workforce who are working but do not have an appropriate job. Usually measured by the unemployment rate, which is dividing the number of unemployed people by the total number of people in the workforce, unemployment serves as one of the indicators of a country's economic status.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the number of people within the labour force who are unemployed or underemployed in Nigeria stood at 27.11 million in 2016 but rose to 31.26 million in 2017 and this trend has not change. This increase depicts an increasing trend in the rate of unemployment and underemployment. In 2018 unemployment came down to 20.9 million (NBS, 2016). Mercer (2016), notes that unemployment tend to be higher among graduates as they often times depend on white collar jobs or make plans to travel outside the country rather than doing anything available. This is contrary to the situation in rural areas or among low skilled unemployed persons who are ready to do any work that is legal.

The unemployment rate in Nigeria stood at 5.3 percent in the first quarter of 2024, representing a third consecutive increase since the second quarter of 2023 (NBS, 2025). However, the underemployment rate fell from 12.3 percent in 2023Q3 to 10.6 percent in 2024Q1. As expected, the unemployment rate was higher in urban centres than in rural settlements. Consequently, Nigeria's misery index - the sum of unemployment and inflation rates - rose to 36.9 percent in 2024Q1 from 30.5 percent in 2023Q3. Nigeria has one of the world's highest misery indexes, with many Nigerians experiencing a cost of living crisis and weak purchasing power due to rising inflation.

Moreover, the unemployment rate was higher amongst the cohorts with post-secondary education (9.0 percent) relative to persons with secondary (6.9 percent) and primary education (4.0 percent). This implies a negative correlation between human capital development and unemployment due to a possible mismatch between labour market entrants and the industry labour requirements. As a result, many unemployed persons finding it difficult to get jobs could be discouraged from further search as reflected in the rate of out-of-labour force which rose to 3.6 percent in 2024Q1 from 3.1 percent in 2023Q3. Also, the rate was the highest among those with post-secondary education. This reiterates the need to revive the technical and vocational education and training scheme to accommodate graduates and school drop-outs. Similarly, unemployment was more pervasive among the youth, suggesting that the majority of them are less engaged in productive activities. This could be responsible for the high rate of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), which rose to 14.4 percent in 2024Q1 from 13.7 percent in 2023Q3. Hence, there is an urgent need to empower youths with productive skills, which could reduce the intensity of social unrest (NBS, 2025).

Poverty

Poverty is a state of deprivation characterized by a lack of essential resources and opportunities necessary for an individual or a community to meet their basic needs for a decent standard of living. These resources include adequate income, shelter, food, health-care, education, and access to clean water and sanitation. Poverty is also defined as a severe deprivation of some basic human needs at the individual or household level in form of material and physical deprivation, this can be viewed as monetary term. In another view point is that poverty as the failure to attain basic capabilities such as being adequately nourished, living a healthy life, possession of skills to participate in economic and social-political life, permission to take part in community activities (Odeh & Okoye, 2014). Chukuma Duru (n.d.) views poverty as a situation of low income and/or low consumption. By World Bank (1990), poverty is inability to attain a minimum standard of living (cited in Chukuma Duru, n.d.). The concept of poverty is

multidimensional and multi-facet in nature and the situation of poverty is depended on people to people, society to society, economy to economy and history to history.

Nigeria's poverty rate is projected to rise sharply to 62%–63% in 2026, with an estimated 140–141 million people living in poverty. Driven by high living costs, weak income growth, and economic reforms, this worsening trend persists despite easing inflation. Poor households are heavily impacted, with food expenses accounting for roughly 70% of their spending. PwC's Nigeria Economic Outlook 2026 suggests the poverty rate will reach 62%, impacting 141 million Nigerians. The World Bank reported that poverty in Nigeria climbed to 63% in 2025 and is expected to remain high in 2026, highlighting a "disconnect" between macroeconomic improvements (such as slowing inflation) and household welfare. According to IMF, Nigeria has been ranked the 12th poorest country in the world by gross domestic product per capita in 2025, according to new data from the International Monetary Fund published by Visual Capitalist.

Theoretical Framework

This research work is anchored on Empowerment theory. Empowerment theory suggests that individuals and groups can gain a greater degree of autonomy, control over their lives, and the ability to effect change in their communities by gaining knowledge, skills, and confidence. Empowerment theory posits that individuals, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, must engage actively in fostering their own abilities and opportunities. According to Arnold and Pätzold (2014), empowerment involves both internal components (such as self-esteem and self-efficacy) and external factors (like resources and opportunities). This theory is instrumental in understanding how systematic barriers can inhibit growth and mobilize resistance among youth facing poverty. Moreover, it postulates that by providing young individuals with tools and environments conducive to empowerment, there will be a resultant increase in their capacity to influence their socio-economic realities.

Empirical Framework

Okposin & Akpan (2025) examine The Impacts of N- Power Programmes on Poverty Reduction and Youth Empowerments in Nigeria (A Study of Eket Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State). The method of data analysis was both qualitative and quantitative, where comparative and descriptive methods were adopted along with the Student's t-test. The stylised facts illustrated that although the N-power programme has offered the beneficiaries a token of income, the income was grossly inadequate. The low income and inability of the beneficiaries to acquire basic goods and services for survival with dignity signified that the youths were not financially empowered; hence, poverty persisted. Also, the empirical evidence revealed that the p-value of 1 was greater than the significance level of 0.05 with a degree of freedom of 10; as such, the null hypothesis was accepted that no significant difference exists in poverty and youth empowerment between the periods of N-power and the period before the N-power programme.

Andor (2024) assessed youth empowerment initiatives and their impact on crime reduction in Benue state the findings reveal a complex relationship between youth empowerment initiatives and crime reduction, highlighting both successes and areas needing improvement.

Akpan, Essien, & Essien (2023) investigated how the N-power program affected unemployment and poverty reduction in Nigeria. In order to compare the two periods, secondary data from 2014 to 2021 were sourced from NBS for the study. The data was analysed using Fisher's student t-test, charts, graphs, and tables. Since poverty rates during N-power average 41.26% and vary over the six years of program implementation, the results of the stylized facts showed that there was no discernible decrease in poverty rates. The lack of a statistically significant difference between the two periods' poverty reductions was confirmed by the p-value of 0.1748, which is greater than 0.05. As the country's unemployment rate continues to rise, the results also indicate that the N-Power programme has not been successful in reducing unemployment.

Bello (2022) evaluated the National Social Investment Program (NSIP) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), using propensity score matching (PSM). The study concluded that the program had a substantial positive impact on poverty reduction among its beneficiaries.

In another study, Adebayo (2021) applied a difference- in-differences (DID) approach to assess the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), finding that participants experienced a notable reduction in poverty compared to non- participants.

Additional studies by Umeh (2020) & Olatunji (2020) examined government intervention initiatives and youth empowerment programs, respectively. Umeh's panel data regression analysis showed a moderate effect on poverty reduction, while Olatunji's ordinary least squares (OLS) regression found a statistically significant but modest influence on urban poverty alleviation.

In their study, Ekong & Ekong (2016) examined how the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State addresses the issue of unemployment through skill acquisition. They used primary and secondary data from secondary sources for the years 1987 to 2012 and discovered a positive correlation between NDE's skill acquisition and unemployment reduction in Akwa Ibom State, despite the lack of significant obstacles. They suggest expanding the number of NDE training centres to all Local Government Areas in the state to maximise the benefits.

Kolawole et al (2015) analysed the correlation between poverty, inequality, and economic growth in Nigeria by utilizing time series data from 1980 to 2012. The statistical method of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) and the error correcting mechanism (ECM) were utilized. e data underwent unit root testing and cointegration testing using the Johansen technique. The variables studied were GDP growth rate, per capita income, literacy rate, government expenditure on education, and government expenditure on health. e report contends that in order to diminish poverty and inequality in Nigeria, it is imperative to enhance the gross domestic product and augment government expenditure on education and health facilities, while simultaneously implementing economic initiatives that prioritise the needs of the underprivileged.

Kolade et al. (2014) demonstrate that empowering young people through entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in achieving sustainable national development. The study identified additional advantages of youth empowerment, particularly through entrepreneurship education. these benefits encompass the promotion of economic growth at both the individual and national levels, the alleviation of poverty, the reduction of unemployment rates, the increase in per capita income, and the mitigation of social issues such as youth restiveness, cultism, armed robbery, vandalism of oil pipelines, kidnapping, insecurity of life and property, human trafficking, and prostitution.

Ozei, Sezgin, & Topkaya (2013) examined the correlation between empowerment and unemployment in seven developed nations (G7). The data from 2000-2011 was analysed using panel regression analysis. The study findings indicate that during the three-crisis period, both productivity and women empowerment have substantial and influential effects on reducing unemployment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed an explanatory research design, which is appropriate for exploring the relationship between youth empowerment; and unemployment and poverty reduction in Yobe State.

Study population

The target population specifically includes respondents and participants who are actively engaged with or have substantial knowledge of youth empowerment programs in the state. These include youth empowerment staffs and officials as well as community members residing in the selected local government area that have an in-depth understanding and experience regarding the youth empowerment programme.

Sampling technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative sample of the population. The first stage involved selecting specific local government within Yobe State, followed by the random selection of participants within these areas. Three local government areas were selected. These three local government selected include Gaidiam (Zone A), Potiskum (Zone B) and Bade (Zone C) local government area of Yobe state. From each local government, 50 respondents were randomly selected bring the total sample size to one hundred and fifty (150) sample size.

Method of data collection

Data was collected through primary source of data collection using questionnaires. Primary data are sourced directly by the researchers for the purpose of a specified research. The questionnaire was distributed to the youth empowerment official and the resident of the selected local governments who were adult.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data was derived from questionnaire response while analysis involved the use of SPSS Chi-square in testing the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance (Adam Hayes, 2022). Tables were used in showing the results and interpretations followed immediately after each $\frac{\sum(O-E)^2}{E}$

$$\text{Chi-Square} = X^2 = \frac{\sum(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Note:

X^2 = Chi-Square

O = Observed Value

E = Expected Value

Degree of Freedom = DF = (Number of Rows – 1) × (Number of Column – 1)

Decision Rule:

$X^2_{cal} > X^2_{crit}$; reject null hypothesis

$X^2_{cal} \leq X^2_{crit}$; accept null hypothesis

3. Results and interpretation

Table 1: Empowerment strategies in Yobe state

Empowerment Strategies	SA	A	SD	D	UD	Total
Education and vocational training	85(56.7%)	38(25.3)	8(5.3%)	19(12.7%)	-	150(100%)
Entrepreneurship development	70(46.7%)	31(20.7%)	15(10.0%)	29(19.3%)	5(3.3%)	150(100%)
Agricultural empowerment	88(58.7%)	34(22.7%)	8(5.3%)	20(13.3%)	-	150(100%)
Digital and ICT empowerment	60(40.0%)	32(21.3%)	22(14.7%)	35(33.4%)	1(0.7%)	150(100%)
Leadership development	30(20.0%)	40(25.7%)	36(24.0%)	44(29.3%)	-	150(100%)
Mentorship	20(13.3%)	44(29.3%)	35(23.3%)	38(25.3%)	13((8.7%)	150(100%)
Economic empowerment	49(32.7%)	63(42.0%)	12(8.0%)	20(13.3%)	6(4%)	150(100%)
Health and wholeness	43(28.7%)	38(25.3%)	30((20.0%)	37(24.7%)	2(1.3%)	150(100%)

Source: Authors computation 2026

Table 1 above sought the opinion of the respondents on empowerment strategies in Yobe state. The result revealed that 56.7% strongly agreed that education and vocational training are empowerment strategies in Yobe state, 25.3% agrees, 5.3% strongly disagreed, and 12.7% disagree. On entrepreneurship development, 46.7% strongly agreed that entrepreneurship is one of the strategies, 20.7% agreed, 10% strongly disagreed, 19.3% disagreed and 3.3% were undecided. 58.7% strongly agreed that agriculture empowerment are empowerment strategy in the state, 22.7% agreed, 5.3% strongly disagree and 13.3% disagreed. The opinions of the respondents in respect to digital and ICT empowerment revealed that 40.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that digital and ICT empowerment is one of the strategies, 21.3% agreed, 14.7% disagreed, 33.4% disagreed and 0.7% were undecided. For leadership development, 20% of the respondents strongly agreed, 25.7% agreed, 24.0% strongly disagreed and 29.3% disagreed. On the part of mentorship, 13.3% of the respondents strongly agreed, 29.3% agreed, 23.3% strongly disagreed, 25.3% disagreed while 8.7% were undecided. The table further revealed that 32.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that economic empowerment is part of the empowerment strategy in the state, 42.0% agreed, 8.0% strongly disagreed and 4.0% were undecided. Finally 28.7% strongly agreed that health and wholeness is one of the strategies of youth empowerment, 25.3% agreed, 20.0% strongly disagreed, 24.7% disagreed and 1.3% were undecided.

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 2: Relationship between Youth Empowerment Programme and Unemployment reduction in Yobe State

Variables	SA{E}	SA{E}	D SA{E}	SD SA{E}	UD SA{E}	Total
Youth empowerment programme in the state such as like Education and Skills Training, Economic Empowerment, Leadership development, Health and Wellness and Mentorship enhance skills for labour market	73{55.3}	50{66.7}	19{11.7}	8{14}	0{3.3}	150
Empowerment programme in the state is aligned with the labour market demand	60{55.3}	63{66.7}	8{11.7}	14{14}	5{3.3}	150
Empowerment programmes increased job prospect	33{55.3}	84{66.7}	8{11.7}	20{14}	5{3.3}	150
Total	166	197	35	42	10	450
The chi-square statistic is 40.16. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at p < .05.						

Source: Authors computation 2026

Table 2 shows that the Chi-square statistics was adapted for the testing of hypothesis one at a significant level of 0.05 with 8 as the degree of freedom, and the result showed that an approximate chi-square calculated value of 40.16 was greater than the table value of 15.507. Hence the result is significant; the researcher rejected the null hypothesis which states that: There is a no significant relationship between youth empowerment programme in Yobe State and unemployment reduction and alternative hypotheses is upheld.

Table 3: Relationship between Youth Empowerment Programme and Poverty in Yobe State

Variables	SA{E}	A{E}	SD{E}	D{E}	UD{E}	Total
There is a direct relationship between unemployment and poverty	48{49.7}	89{72.7}	4{13.3}	6{13.3}	3{2}	150
Empowerment programmes in the state address the challenges of poverty	46{49.7}	67{72.7}	28{13.3}	12{13.3}	0{2}	150
Empowerment programme such as Education and Skills Training, Economic Empowerment, Leadership development, Health and Wellness and Mentorship enhance skills for labour market improve the socio-economic condition of the youths and economic opportunities in the state	55{49.7}	62{72.7}	8{13.3}	22{13.3}	3{2}	150
Total	149	218	40	40	6	450
The chi-square statistic is 69.68. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at p < .05.						

Source: Authors computation 2026

Table 3 shows that the Chi-square statistics was adapted for the testing of hypothesis two at a significant level of 0.05 with 8 as the degree of freedom, and the result showed that an approximate chi-square calculated value of 69.68 was greater than the table value of 15.507 at 0.05. Hence the result is significant; therefore, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis which states that: There is no significant

relationship between youth empowerment programmes and poverty reduction in Yobe state. Rather, the alternative hypothesis which states there is a significant relationship youth empowerment programmes and poverty reduction in Yobe state is upheld.

Summary of the Findings

This study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of youth empowerment programme in Yobe State, particularly in reducing unemployment and poverty among the youths in the state. The result of hypothesis test {Chi-square test} showed that there is a significant relationship between youth empowerment programs; and unemployment reduction ((40.16, $p < 0.05$)) and poverty reduction (69.681, $p < 0.05$) in Yobe state and the relationship is a positive relationship.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Youth empowerment is a powerful tool for unemployment and poverty reduction in Yobe State. By investing in the development of young people through education and vocational training, entrepreneurship development, agricultural empowerment; and digital and ICT empowerment in state, it has transform the youthful population into a productive workforce (reduced unemployment) that has reduced poverty and foster economic growth and development of the state.

Recommendations

1. Both the government and the non-governmental organization should ensure that all youths irrespective of their background should have equal or unlimited access to empowerment programs.
2. They should also be effective monitoring, assessments and evaluation framework to track the progress and the challenges of youth empowerment program in Yobe state.

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