Interrogating the Effectiveness of Poverty Alleviation Measures in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari's Administration (2015-2023)

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Abstract

Poverty is one of the major challenges faced by nations across the globe especially developing countries. Evidently, certain measures and strategies have been adopted by different governments of countries as well as development organizations to address this issue which has appeared to be a conundrum in some countries. Nigeria as a country is not an exception to the above as some strategies have been adopted by successive governments to address the challenge. In contributing to this discourse, this paper aims to explore the effectiveness of poverty alleviation measures in Nigeria pinning it down to Buhari's administration (2015-2023). In the course of this study, the poverty level of Nigeria prior to Buhari's government in 2015 was unpacked so as to strongly establish the extent to which the measures adopted by the government have yielded results putting the country's current level of poverty into consideration. The paper adopted a literature review-based method driven by content analysis. The major implication of this paper suggests a deeper understanding of the ineffectiveness and sustainability-insensitivity of Buhari's government poverty alleviation model. Therefore, the model performed abysmally poor and needs to be disregarded by the current government and other countries facing similar poverty challenges. As a panacea, this paper recommended for infrastructure investment model to address the prevailing poverty in the country.

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Introduction

Poverty is one of the problems that have generated a lot of concerns among policymakers, intellectuals and development partners across the globe. It is a complex issue that has continuously challenged humanity in all spheres of life impacting greatly on economic, social, environmental, and political development (Dannan, 2018). More disturbingly, it is multi-dimensional and has become pervasive in developing countries especially in Africa such as Nigeria. Despite having a great endowment of natural resources, including undeveloped solid minerals, petroleum, agricultural, and human resources, Nigeria is not exempted from the predominance of poverty compared to wealthy nations (Aderounmu et al., 2021). Poverty is greatly spreading heavily across states in Nigeria to the level that a significant population of citizens has been immensely affected (Federal Office of Statistics, 1996, as cited in Oshewolo, 2010). The estimates of poverty level per person per year in 2003-2004 and 2009-2010 were ₦28,836.70 and ₦55,235.20 respectively (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2012). Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (2010) reveals that the rate of poverty in Nigeria stood at 68.7 million in 2014. The above is not different from the submission by Omotola (2008) that 70 percent of Nigerian citizens live in abject poverty. The average income per person in Nigeria is roughly $1,000, compared to $32,000 in the USA (Ikhariale, 2007).

The foregoing contending issue has compelled successive governments in the country to implement certain initiatives towards addressing the problem. Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG1) intends to eradicate all types of poverty by 2030, which highlights the significance of poverty eradication (Aderounmu et al., 2021). While lending credence to this assertion, Aibieyi & Dirisu (2010, p. 243) observed that "researches have shown that earlier policies and programmes directed at alleviating poverty by different governments have not made much impact for several reasons. For instance, Gowon's Accelerated Food Production Programme (AFPP), Obasanjo's Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Shagari's River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) and Green Revolution (GR) Babangida's Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), National Directorate for Employment (NDE), Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructural (DFRRI) Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLP) National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN) Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB), Abacha's Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Obasanjo's Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) etc. All failed not because of poor conception but on account of operationalization, haphazard, non-focused, blurred, corrupt and selfish implementation

process. More often than not these programmes are hijacked by corrupt, selfish and self-centered individuals or groups within the domain of power. The resultant end is always epileptic, dismal implementation or performance of the programme. A good example is the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), a lot of enthusiasm, a huge amount of money and human resources were committed to the programme but its impact in alleviating poverty is a disappointment because it was never felt". In 2011, the government of Goodluck Jonathan came up with an initiative titled the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) which was implemented with the primary aim of eradicating poverty among the people by providing job opportunities for unemployed graduates (Dauada et al., 2019). However, this noble objective was not achieved as unemployment and poverty among young people have continued to increase (Ahiauzu & Asawo, 2016). While attempting to establish the correlation between income inequality, poverty and economic development in Nigeria, Nwosa and Ehinomen (2020) argued that poverty has not impacted significantly on the economic growth of the country unlike the submission by Olowa (2012) that poverty in Nigeria is attributed to lack of job opportunities, poor economic growth and low productivity.

Arguably, this topical issue has attracted a lot of scholarly interest by way of interrogation as shown above but there seems to be a scanty study on the poverty eradication strategies adopted by Nigeria state from 2015 till date. This submission is strengthened through the assertion by Aderounmu et al. (2021) that the inability of Nigeria to ensure a healthy life for her citizens unlike other countries suggests the need for studies interrogating the problem as well as its implications on national development. The above scenario therefore informs the objective of this paper which is to explore the effectiveness of poverty alleviation measures in Nigeria putting Buhari's administration (2015-2023) into context. Moreover, examining the measures adopted by Buhari's government will lead to better policy interventions by the current government of Tinubu towards poverty eradication. Consequently, this paper is structured as follows. The first part of the paper provides clear information on the methods adopted for the study; the second part is a literature review while the third section centres on critical interrogation of Buhari's government poverty alleviation measures and discussions of findings; and finally concluding remarks together with infrastructure investment model suggested for poverty alleviation in Nigeria and beyond.

Methodology

This is a literature review-based study driven by content analysis. The literature review is distinguished by a replicable and methodical strategy for determining and assessing the state of the art in a certain field of study (Fink, 2005). It integrates research in a methodical, transparent and replicable way to advance understanding and guide practice and policy (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003).

Accordingly, the study focused on peer-reviewed papers investigating issues around poverty and poverty alleviation measures in Nigeria. Consequently, a keyword search was carried out using SCOPUS and Web of Science (WoS) databases. These databases form a major part of the tools used in this methodology. Where available, Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and Uniform Resources Locators (URL) of the papers were provided for easier verification. The justification for this selection is underscored in the submission by Thome, Scavarda, and Scavarda (2016) in Cantarelli & Genovese (2023: 1352) while arguing that "These two search databases are selected as they are the most comprehensive and commonly used databases of peer-reviewed journals in the social sciences and specifically management. Moreover, the use of these citation databases ensures a wider range of studies being identified as it indexes several journals and vendor databases in a central location". Also, publications from government establishments and international organizations such as the NBS, Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHDS), United Nations and World Bank were equally considered.

The two main variables in this paper are poverty and poverty alleviation measures. In the course of screening the literature, it was discovered that the poverty alleviation measure was differently used as a strategy, model and initiative. Papers on poverty alleviation measures in general were discarded due to their insignificant relevance. In all, 321 articles were considered using formal inclusion and exclusion criteria and this resulted in 65 articles which were finally found relevant and used for the paper.

Literature Review
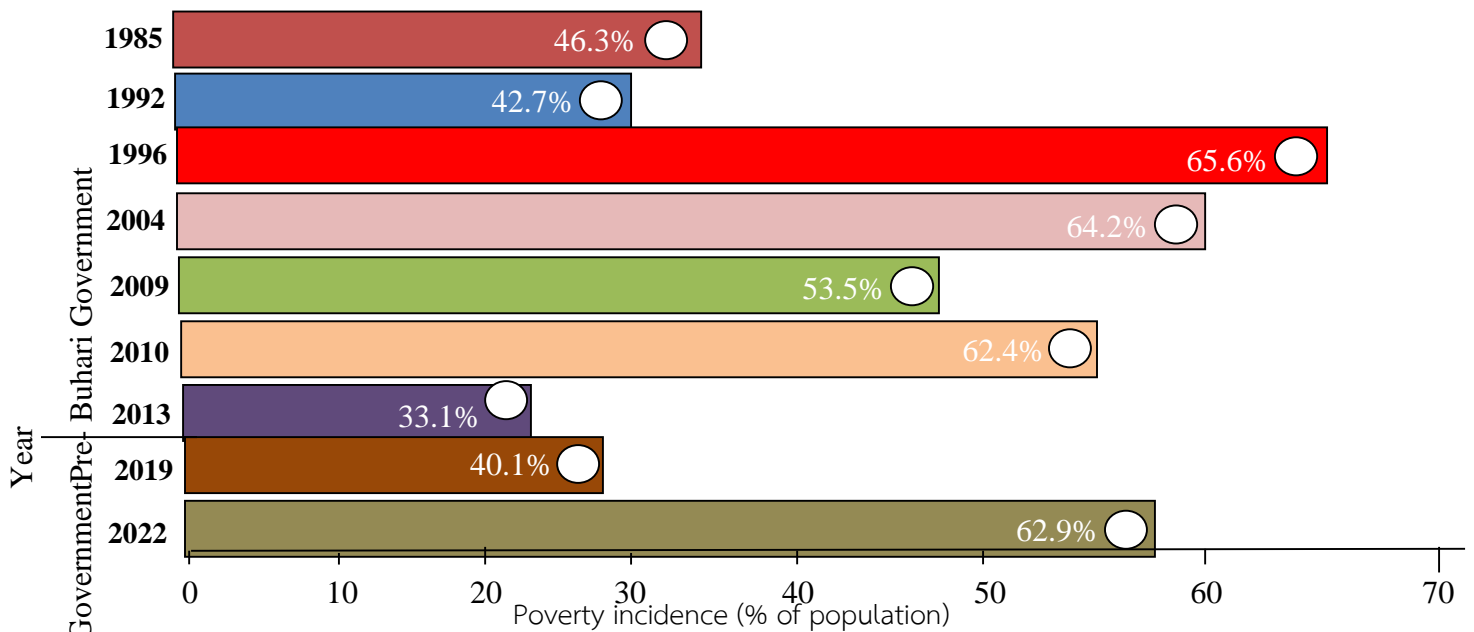
Poverty and Poverty Alleviation

One of the major problems the world is confronting in this twenty-first century is poverty (Gweshengwe & Hassan, 2020). This explains why SDG 1 of the United Nations calls for its eradication by the year 2030 (United Nations, 2015). Similarly, the World Bank is concentrating on reducing the global poverty rate from 10% in 2015 to 3% by 2030 (Tomizawa et al., 2019; World Bank, 2018). In the past, scholars have described poverty in monetary terms, based on levels of income or consumption. In this context, poverty is defined as a lack of income, a low level of income in comparison to others in the society under consideration, or an income below a country's official poverty line (Adeyonu et al., 2020). People are considered poor if their per capita income is below the poverty line (Ravallion, 2010). Notwithstanding, Imoudu (1998) argues it from a wider point of view by submitting that the concept of poverty has gone beyond this traditional view in that poverty is a lack of the necessities of life. Regardless of the approach used to define it, poverty can be quantified in absolute or relative terms. Absolute poverty occurs when a person lacks the most basic necessities for survival. It is explained as impoverished individuals who live below the specified poverty level (Gweshengwe & Hassan, 2020; Ikejiaku, 2009). People experience relative poverty when their standard of living is much lower than the general standard of living. Poor people are those whose conditions are inferior to those of others (Gandolfi & Neck, 2010).

For this paper, the term "poverty" is viewed as a situation where a portion of the population of a country cannot meet their most basic needs such as food, clothing, and healthcare. This view refers to the whole economic well-being of the poor without the distribution of social welfare. Poverty is also defined as a person's lack of resources relative to other people in their social group. This definition of poverty simply takes into account how groups and social classes interact which is linked to the disparity in how wealth and well-being are distributed among social classes in a given area (Nguyen et al., 2021).

On the other hand, poverty alleviation refers to efforts, strategies or measures put in place by governments, organizations and individuals to significantly lessen the level of poverty among people. Its approach manifests in policies, programmes and projects implemented to address issues around poverty such as inequality, unemployment and lack of access to basic facilities among others. It is argued that theoretical frameworks for eradicating poverty have evolved during the last six decades. In the

1970s and 1990s, academics and international development organizations stepped up their discussions on strategies for eradicating poverty and advancing development (Sen, 1976; Streeten & Burki, 1978; Wong, 2012). Organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank have led the fight against poverty during the past three decades, especially in developing nations. The Millennium Development Goals were established as a result of these conversations (United Nations, 2000; United Nations, 2011; United Nations Publications, 2010) which sought to significantly reduce extreme poverty in the developing countries by 2015. Additionally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), precisely SDG1, have been implemented as a follow-up to the MDGs with the aim of eradicating extreme poverty worldwide by 2030 (United Nations, 2017). The World Social Summit declared the elimination of poverty to be an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humanity and urged governments to address the causes of poverty, meet citizens' basic needs, and ensure that the poor have access to resources that will help them become more productive (United Nations, 2023).

Table 1. Trajectory of Poverty Rate in Nigeria

Source: NBS (2012, 2023) and World Bank (2014)

Buhari's Government Poverty Alleviation Model

Given the disturbing situation of poverty together with the common understanding that government exists for the people, Buhari's government upon emergence in 2015 came up with certain initiatives towards tackling poverty in the country. The government's model for alleviating poverty centres on the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) which has various components. Quoting President Buhari, Punch (2016) reported the following; "we are committed to providing job opportunities for 500,000 teachers and 10,000 artisans across the nation. A total of 5.5 million children are to be provided with nutritious meals through our school feeding programme to improve learning outcomes, as well as enrolment and completion rates. The conditional cash transfer scheme will provide financial support for up to one million vulnerable beneficiaries and complement the enterprise programme which will target up to one million market women, 460,000 artisans; and 200,000 agricultural workers, nationwide. Finally, through the education grant scheme, we will encourage students to study sciences, technology, engineering and maths and lay a foundation for human capital development for the generation". Similarly, Lamidi and Igbokwe (2021) argued that the NSIP is a collection of many schemes put together by the administration to address social challenges such as rising poverty, unemployment, cybercrime, a declining standard of education, and others resulting from growing global economic crises.

The various components of the programme were N-Power, Government Enterprise and Empowerment, Conditional Cash Transfer and Home Grown School Feeding meant to ensure a more fair distribution of resources to vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and young people. According to The Nation (2021), the NSIP, initiated in 2016, is best described as an "agency within the purview of the office of the Vice president but the creation of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Poverty Alleviation and Disaster Management meant that the agency has a new supervising authority away from the busy office of the vice president". The above background enables this paper to interrogate these various components of the programme for valid findings.

N-Power Programme

N-Power is a job creation and skill development initiative created to support young Nigerians in acquiring and developing lifelong skills that will enable them to become innovative players in both the domestic and international markets as well as practical solution providers in their communities. Young Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35 were eligible for the N-Power programme. The scheme was further divided into Graduates and Non-Graduates programmes (N-power Information Guide, 2017, as

cited in Attah, Omang, Ojong-Ejoh, & Botchway, 2021). Primarily, the scheme aimed at curbing unemployment and improving social security among young people. Beyond developing lasting skills among Nigerian youth, it aimed at transforming the young people into change agents in their various communities and by extension enhancing the country's public services in different sectors such as health and education (NSIP, 2017). Additionally, the N-Power scheme, implemented under the National Social Investments Programmes of the Nigerian Federal Government, is "geared towards graduates' job creation; poverty alleviation and empowerment initiatives through volunteering services", accessible to both graduates and non-graduates (Federal Government of Nigeria [FGN], 2018, as cited in Dauda et al., 2019, p. 42). It is a two-year paid volunteering programme that lasted more than five years. Graduate volunteers of the programme were expected to perform their primary duties in designated public services located in their local areas in line with the programme's objectives. Each beneficiary received a mobile device, and in addition to receiving a monthly stipend, they were also entitled to a monthly mobile data allowance from their network provider. They could connect to the internet using their mobile data to view training materials that had been put on the tablet to help them with their work (FGN, 2017, as cited in Ijoko, Balami, & Alkali, 2020).

N-Power Graduate Programme

Stating the objectives of the programme, the Nation (2021) reported that "through this initiative, the government trains unemployed school leaders such as graduates in different vocations to be gainfully engaged. The graduates were posted to different organizations and institutions to work for a given period. They were paid stipends as a stopgap before they secure permanent paid employment". The Graduates Programme was further divided into N-Tech, N-Agro, N-Tax and N-Health. Under the N-Tech, volunteers were deployed as teachers' assistants in primary schools in their respective localities. The schools relied on them to offer teaching, instructional, and advisory services. Volunteers of N-Tech were expected to assist in enhancing the delivery of fundamental education in Nigerian schools. The N-Health required its beneficiaries to help vulnerable members of society, such as pregnant women, children, families, and individuals, by promoting and enhancing healthcare in their local areas. Only individuals who studied medical-related courses were qualified. Beneficiaries of the N-Agro served as agricultural extension agents who advised farmers across the nation. The volunteers were expected to disseminate information provided by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development through their extension programmes. They were also expected to collect information on Nigeria's agricultural resources. Youth who undertook courses related to agriculture were engaged in this particular area.

Volunteers working for N-Tax were expected to serve as community tax liaison officers and perform duties such as tax promotion, document review, record keeping, responding to internet queries, customer management, and report writing among others. This important field attracted young people who had completed post-secondary studies in computer and information science. N-power assessment report revealed that 200,000 young people participated in the programme in 2017 which resulted to reduction in youth unemployment from 23.6 percent to 16.6 percent, and another 300,000 in 2018, thereby leading to further reduction in youth unemployment from 32.45 percent to 29.75 percent (NBS, 2019, as cited in Attah et al., 2021).

N-Power Non-Graduate Programme

In a bid to ensure that a reasonable percentage of young people participated in the scheme, the federal government led by President Buhari also established certain components of the program specifically for non-graduate young Nigerians who were unemployed. These aspects of the programme include N-Knowledge, N-Creative and N-Build. The N-Knowledge volunteers who fell under the non-graduate category received training in a variety of areas and were issued certificates. This was aimed at enhancing their capacities towards competing favorably in both domestic and international markets thereby making them relevant in the knowledge-based economy. N-Build volunteers received thorough training in a variety of trades, including plumbing, welding, fabrication, painting, and carpentry. N-Creative was another area of this component where non-graduates were trained in graphic design, post-production, animation and script writing. The non-graduate component was only intended to last for a year, and for that time they received a ₦10,000 monthly stipend. Toolkits were given to volunteers as an exit package (FGN, 2017, as cited in Ijoko, Balami, & Alkali, 2020). State and local governments in the country played a vital role in implementing the N-Power programme. The implementation was decentralized using a tripartite approach involving the federal, state and local governments. Arguably, the scheme led to the temporal engagement of certain unemployed Nigerian young people. Various schemes of the NSIP between 2016 and 2018 especially N-Power resulted in the employment of 520,000 young people in the country (National Social Investment Office, 2018, as cited in Onah & Olise, 2019).

Deconstructing it from a negative perspective, Obi-Ani and Isiani (2020) and Okeke et al. (2020) argued that the socioeconomic and political life of the majority of world-famous cities such as China, Japan, and several Asian nations is driven by human resources, the situation is different in many developing countries, including Nigeria, where youths in urban centers struggle with poverty,

unemployment, slum life, and other socioeconomic issues primarily as a result of lack of effective youth-development policies. While numerous youth empowerment and poverty alleviation programmes have been launched in Nigeria by successive governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations that have recognized the value of young people in the development of the country; many of these programmes results have remained ambiguous, leaving room for concern (Holt & Neely, 2011; Ogunmefun & Okuneye, 2020). It is further contended that the inauguration of a Committee (Technical Working Group on Youth Employment and Skill Development) by the same Buhari government to tackle increasing youth unemployment suggests the poor performance of the N-Power programme. Maslow and Chung (2013), as cited in Olanade et al. (2022), observed that due to the worrisome unemployment rate, the nation's youth have recently become a topic of discussion. Through training and retraining programmes, empowerment initiatives, and entrepreneurship, the government of Nigeria and other relevant stakeholders have made an effort to improve the lives of Nigerian youths. These initiatives have been supported by the World Bank, NGOs, and even the private-sector. Certain NGOs and prominent individuals, including the Tony Elumelu Foundation and LEEP Africa, among others, have undoubtedly committed funds to ensure that similar unemployment crises are avoided. All of these actions were taken to increase job creation, reduce poverty, and generate income for both individuals and the government, thereby leading to economic diversification, which will lessen reliance on government spending and oil revenue and promote economic growth and development. However, these attempts have not stopped Nigeria's rising unemployment rate, which has contributed to youth unrest, social isolation, and general underdevelopment. In a similar vein, Holt and Neely (2011) stated that the youth rate of unemployment and vulnerability continues to rise despite some of these policies and programmes that highlight employability and entrepreneurship skills.

Conditional Cash Transfer

Social protection measures are aimed at providing funds or consumption transfers to vulnerable people as well as protecting them against livelihood dangers and improving their social condition. These initiatives which can be executed by political authorities, non-governmental organizations or the private sector are intended to eradicate poverty, vulnerability and risks. Additionally, it has a way of improving healthcare, education and gender balance among others (Hagen-Zanken & Holmes, 2012). While tracing the historical development of conditional cash transfer, Eluma, Yinusa, and Bamidele (2018, p. 2) inferred that "The CCT originated from Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2002, Mexico's CCT program reached more than four million families, representing 20 percent of the Mexican population, and commanded

and annual budget was around Mex$18 billion (US$1.8 billion equivalent to approximately 0.32% of GDP)". Meanwhile, there is mixed evidence on the effectiveness of conditional cash transfer as some studies have shown that it is capable of addressing poverty-related issues, unlike the critics that have argued differently pointing at its sustainability-insensitivity (Holmes et al., 2012). In Nigeria, a significant part of the population is impoverished and this informed the collaboration between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the World Bank on the National Social Safety Nets Project (NASSP). The National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO) and the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) under the National Social Investment Programmes were also established by the government for that purpose. They were expected to make safety net transfers to targeted poor and vulnerable households across Nigeria. As the Nation (2021) puts it "Conditional Cash Transfer is a scheme where comprehensive database of poor and vulnerable Nigerians are captured with a view to giving them monthly stipends to cushion the effects of poverty across the country. It utilized the support and cooperation of local community leaders in its efforts to capture poor households". Conditional Cash Transfer is aimed at giving poor and vulnerable households access to transfers through a strengthened national social safety net system. Between 2016 and 2019, the Conditional Cash Transfer initiative provided assistance to 297,973 extremely impoverished Nigerians (Onah & Olise, 2019).

Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme

Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) is an aspect of the larger programme (NSIP) which aims to give Nigerians at the bottom of the economic pyramid access to microcredit and financial inclusion (Adamgbe et al., 2020). It was designed to support the development of low-productive sectors of the population, bringing millions of people into the modern economy and lifting communities out of poverty. It is a micro-lending investment project that provides interest and collateral-free loans to the beneficiaries, lowering the start-up costs of business operations in Nigeria especially for young people and women entrepreneurs. Two major goals drove the creation of this programme: to increase access to funds for persons at the bottom of the economic pyramid who engage in commercial activity but encounter considerable barriers to credit and financing; and financial inclusion through these microloans provides access to finance by ensuring that the recipients are brought under the former financial sector and can further take advantage of the possibility to obtain other credit products from financial service providers (FMHDS, 2018). The programme enumerators registered people using a specialised app on tablets or smartphones; no paper or forms were used. Traders' biodata, GPS position, and facial identification were also captured. Over 4,000 GEEP agents were deployed to market

clusters across Nigeria (Onah & Olise, 2019).The programme had three components which were MarketMoni (a loan programme that offers interest- and collateral-free loans to SMEs within established market association clusters), TraderMoni (a microloan programme that offers interest- and collateral-free loans to Nigerian petty traders and artisans), and FarmerMoni (a loan given to farmers that belong to farming cooperative societies). In literal sense, these names were derived from the pidgin language, which is widely spoken in Nigeria (Onah & Olise, 2019; Adamgbe et al., 2020; FMHDS, 2018).The programme received a ₦140 billion to empower over a million women, 200,000 MSMEs and artisans, 260,000 young businesses, and 200,000 farmers and agricultural workers(Adamgbe et al., 2020; FMHDS, 2018). Adamgbe et al. (2020) posit that the credits have been successfully given to 2.3 million citizens against the projections of 20 million Nigerians by 2030. The Nation (2021) commented that "Youths were given between ₦50,000 and ₦100,000 to be able to execute any business idea they have".

National Home Grown School Feeding Programme

National Home Grown School Feeding Programme sought to provide a cost-effective home-grown school feeding programme with a focus on increasing school enrolment, reducing the incidence of malnutrition, especially among the poor; and empowering cooks while supporting local agriculture through small-holder farmers, thereby spurring economic growth through the socioeconomic value chain. "The programme aimed to address the challenges inherent in the educational sector, especially those relating to the high number of school-age pupils who are out of school. Specifically, the programme was designed to ensure greater enrolment of pupils into school by feeding them while at school. The decision to carry out the programme was due to the high level of poverty in the country as many parents lack the financial muscle to feed let alone send kids to school. To bridge the gap, the government opted for school feeding arrangements where young pupils would have opportunities to feed in schools at least once a day. The objective was also to ensure that the attention of the young pupils would be gained with the attendant increase in the quality of output in school leaving graduates. More eloquently, The Nation (2021) describes the scheme as it "equally aimed to boost the local economy of rural areas by engaging women who cook as well as source their materials from local farmers who ultimately provide the needed inputs". More specifically, the programme aimed to:

1. Increase school enrolment;

2. Strengthen local agricultural economies by providing a school feeding market where farmers can sell their produce directly, with the revival of community warehouses;

3. Create employment opportunities in catering and health care;

4. Improve child nutrition and health.

Home Grown School Feeding Programme created 96,972 jobs as people were engaged as cooks (National Social Investment Office, 2018, as cited in Onah & Olise, 2019). It is argued that the programme recorded success to an extent. The increase in school enrolment of pupils has been attributed to Home Grown School Feeding Programme. School enrolment and attendance in Nigeria are slowly improving. Males and females between the ages of 5 and 14 who were enrolled in school in 2018 had attendance rates of 78.4 percent and 78.7 percent, respectively (World Bank, 2019).

Discussions

The findings of the study suggest that the implementation of N-Power programme did not lead to the desired outcome which was to reduce youth unemployment thereby alleviating poverty among the young people in the country. This result is in congruence with the submission by Onah and Olise (2019) that 520, 000 Nigerian citizens benefited from N-power programme but the trajectory of poverty among the young people in Nigeria from the time Buhari's government came into power (29th May, 2015) to the period the government exited (29th May, 2023) suggests that the programme did not impact significantly. 58.7 percent of adults over the age of 18 have many poverty related issues (NBS, 2022). Unemployment is a major indicator of poverty among the young people in the country; and this was the primary reason for the N-power programme. But available data shows that the programme could not achieve this primary objective as youth unemployment in the country has disturbingly continued to increase. NBS, as cited in Ofoma (2022), reveals that the country's unemployment rate stood at 33.3%, with young people making up 42.5 percemt of the population. Unemployment in Nigeria has been rising since 2018, precisely from 21.8% in the third quarter of 2018 to 33.3 percent at the end of 2020. Additionally, the rate of underemployment grew from 16.3 percent in the third quarter of 2018 to 22.8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020. Throughout this time, young people have been most impacted. In 2020, the unemployment rate for those between the ages of 15 and 24 was estimated to be 53.4 percent. At the state level, Imo (56.6 percent), Adamawa (54.9 percent), and Cross River (53.7 percent) had the highest unemployment rates in 2020 before COVID-19 started (NBS, 2022). Nigerian young people have been plagued with numerous problems, including unemployment, poverty, and social marginalization; rather than utilizing the potential of these enormous human resources (Osabuohien et al., 2020). According to NBS report, the unemployment rate for Nigerian youths in the third quarter of

2017 alone was 23.1 percent for those between the age of 15 and 24; and 20.2 percent for those between 25 and 34 (Ojoye, 2018). This demonstrates the increasing level of youth unemployment in Nigeria. It suffices the paradox of suffering among abundance considering the tremendous human and material resources that the nation is endowed with (Apata et al., 2010).

Equally, the results show that the Conditional Cash Transfer programme could not achieve its objective not only because of its unsustainable nature but also its significant ineffectiveness when compared with the rising inflation and exchange rate between naira and foreign currencies. This opinion is accentuated in the observation by Jacho (2022) that given even the value of Nigerian currency, it is difficult to infer that the Conditional Cash Transfer was successful in providing such people with a pitiful monthly stipend of 5,000 naira (₦5,000). Using purchasing power parity of $1.90 per day, Naushad et al. (2020) estimated that the proportion of extremely poor people in Nigeria increased from 40.1% in 2018 to 42.8% in 2020. This illuminates that as of 2020, there were over 80 million Nigerians who were severely poor. Where then is the impact of Conditional Cash Transfer?

The findings on the GEEP demonstrated that the programme recorded a significant positive impact. Supporting this submission, Onah and Olise (2019) argued that 4,084 cooperative societies received financial support, while 317,212 and 1,061,592 individuals obtained loans through TraderMoni and MarketMoni respectively. As of 2018, the programme offered low-cost microloans to over a million women, young entrepreneurs, agricultural workers, and other vulnerable economic producers. This implies that GEEP was more effective than other National Social Investment Programmes in fostering the growth of a population segment that would otherwise have low productivity, bringing millions of people into the modern economy while eradicating poverty in communities. Obasi and Uduji (2023) also lend credence to this position while observing that GEEP has significantly impacted on the entrepreneurial capacities of young women in Nigeria especially in rural communities. Through GEEP, 725,000 businesses were offered financial assistance and training in 2018. Furthermore, 42,000 cooperative societies across 36 states of the federation were given loans (FMHDS, 2018). Moreover, Obasi and Uduji added that their analysis of the distribution of the loans in identifying the FGN's investment and the spread highlighted that "only about 2 percent of GEEP participants have received financial assistance worth more than one hundred Nigerian Naira (₦100,000). Other results show that 46 percent received between ₦61,000 to ₦ 80,000, while 16 percent received ₦41,000 to ₦ 60,000, and 18 percent ₦81,000 to ₦100,000. While 12 percent received ₦21,000 to ₦40,000, only 6 percent received

just ₦1,000 to ₦20,000. This shows that the federal government has significantly invested in the intervention to boost decent job creation" (Obasi & Uduji, 2023: p. 15-16).

For the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme, the findings demonstrate that the programme recorded insignificant success. This submission is made on the premise that the country's school enrolment picture is still seemingly gloomy. 29 percent of all children who are of school age do not attend school. 94 percent of all children who are not in school are impoverished, which is closely related to multidimensional poverty. Thus, 27 percent of all school-aged children are uneducated and destitute (with no discernible gender disparities), making this a crucial area in need of immediate attention. Nigeria Multi-dimensional Poverty Index 2018 reveals that employment and education (years of schooling and child school attendance) have the highest weighted contributions to poverty in the nation. The findings indicate that Nigerians are more deprived in terms of work, years of education, and child attendance, which respectively contributed 24.89 percent, 21.98 percent, and 13.19 percent to poverty (NBS, 2022). Additionally, 47.4 percent of children under the age of 18 are estimated to be living in financial poverty. Urban children make up 22.9 percent of the population, while rural children make up 59.5 percent. The Monetary Child Poverty Analysis made by Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning (MFBNP) and NBS provides the foundation for these projections (United Nations Children's Fund, 2021).

Limitations

One of the constraints to this study is the inability of the researcher to access some peer-reviewed papers that have stringent financial conditions to be met. Arguably, the non-use of these papers could impact negatively the quality of this study since the topics and abstracts of those articles suggest their potential relevance. Also, the study's focus on only English-speaking peer-reviewed papers might affect the quality of this paper. To address these challenges, the researcher accessed more relevant peer-reviewed papers than would have been the case, especially from Scopus and Web of Science databases. The researcher made use of the internet to access relevant articles. Therefore, the poor network experienced in the course of this study also impacted negatively as the study was completed later than the time designed. Lastly, it is contended that bias remains a challenge to data collection and this could affect the validity of findings of this paper. To prevent any form of bias as this study was driven by content analysis, the paper adopted a two-stage process whereby peer-reviewed

papers which did not show significant relevance by their titles and abstracts were read to make a valid decision.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper critically investigated the model (National Social Investment Programme) for poverty alleviation adopted by the immediate past government of Nigeria led by President Buhari. In order to have a balanced discussion, the paper interrogated initiatives implemented by Buhari's predecessors together with their challenges and outcomes. It therefore proceeded to examine various components of Buhari's government model (NSIP) as well as their processes, activities and issues. The findings and discussions of the study demonstrate that only one component of the programme (GEEP) had a significant positive impact. Inference from the above is that Buhari's government model could not produce a sustained outcome for addressing poverty in Nigeria. For emphasis, the poverty rate before Buhari's government and when the government was about to exit stood at 33.1 percent and 62.9 percent respectively. Therefore, the policy implications of the above suggest a change of strategy.

Consequently, this paper recommends for infrastructure investment model driven by a public-private partnership arrangement. This entails seeking the participation of the private sector to practically show significant commitment to infrastructures in critical sectors such as power, transportation, health, security and education. This will not only enhance the people's standard of living but will also provide an enabling environment that makes businesses thrive especially small and medium enterprises where the poorest of the poor are actively involved. Additionally, there is a need for further studies interrogating the politics of poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

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