

**POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN  
NIGERIA: A Case Study of Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in Sardauna Local  
Government Area of Taraba State**

**BY**

**DR. UMAR, DAHIRU JONGUR**

*Department of Political Science and Administration,  
Adamawa State University, Mubi*

**ROBERTSON ZUBAIRU**

*Department of Political Science and Administration,  
Adamawa State University, Mubi  
Tel: 08065327185/zubairurobertson@gmail.com*

**ABSTRACT**

*This research work assesses poverty alleviation programme and youth empowerment in Nigeria with reference to Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State), the objectives were to identify the challenges facing Youth Empowerment Scheme, examine the impact of Youth Empowerment Scheme and evaluate the effectiveness of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in monitoring Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). 400 questionnaires were administered to 400 respondents out of which 375 were retrieved for the analysis. The survey method was used to analyse data obtained from respondents through the use of Likert rating scale in form of simple percentage. The analysis found that, youths in Sardauna Local Government are educationally poor and lazy coupled with diversion of funds by government officials provided for Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), that there is a significance relationship between poverty alleviation programme and youth empowerment, despite that Youth Empowerment Scheme has not reduced the rate of unemployment, but it has reduced the level of poverty, and Youth Empowerment Scheme has also increased the level of economy despite the fact that there was no much jobs creation through the skills. In line with the findings, the research recommends that Government should encourage individuals, philanthropists and philanthropic organizations to set up poverty alleviation related NGOs to supplement their efforts in fighting the scourge of poverty in Sardauna Local Government and Nigeria at large.*

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background to the Study**

Poverty is a global problem that affects socio-economic and political aspects of lives of about 2 billion people across the globe. Poverty is most peculiar in developing countries of Latin America, Asia, Africa and Nigeria specifically (Oshewolo, 2010).

Studies revealed that Nigeria is the richest and most populated country in Sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated 170 million people, but the alarming magnitude of Poverty in the country has reached a worrisome level as featured ignorance, unemployment, malnutrition, malady and inadequate access to credit scheme are apparent among the citizens (Bakare & Edozie, 2015). Since the attainment of political independence, the government has implemented poverty

alleviation programs and policies such as: Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National poverty Reduction Programs (NPRP) among others. Nevertheless, previous studies revealed that the programs yielded little impact, as the basic indicators of basic health, qualitative education, assistance programs, standard of living and the right to social security revealed that 46 percent of Nigerians are living below the national poverty line of \$2.5 per day and nearly 70 percent of the rural population are living in abject poverty.

Taraba state poverty head count indicates that about 51.8% of the populations are poor (UNDP, 2016), national Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was 0.448 in 2017 while the 2018 UNDP measure of the state-level are: MPI is 0.35, and the Human Development Index is 0.4286. This figure indicates that Taraba state HDI score is below the national average (UNDP, 2017). In 2019, Taraba state poverty statistics are MPI-0.335, H-64.8%, A-51.7%, Vulnerable-20.4%, Severe Poor-33.8%, Population Share-1.6%. On the whole, about 1.6 million people are presumed poor in Taraba state. Despite these poor statistics, a major contributor to the national food security agenda of the federal government because of its massive production of maize, soya-beans, ground nut, cow pea, sorghum, millet, yam, cassava, rice, ginger, smoked-fish and livestock, among others.

Taraba state has about six million hectares of fertile land with both tropical and semi temperate climate suitable for the commercial production of cereals (maize, sorghum, millet and rice), tuber crops (yam, cassava and potatoes), tree crops (citrus, mangoes, cashew, guava, kola nut, coffee and tea), and vegetable crops (pepper, cabbage, water melon, green beans and lettuce). Taraba is one of the states with the highest concentration of livestock, fisheries and forest resources. In this light, the agricultural sector employs about eighty percent of the population that if empowered, can turn around the fortunes of the state (TSEEDS, 2004).

However, this research work seeks to investigate the impact of Youth Empowerment Scheme on youth in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State and Nigeria at large.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Poverty alleviation programmes are generally put in place by the government to eradicate poverty. In 2016, the Taraba State Government in its effort towards poverty eradication through Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) put down some measures such as; Hope and Fresh Foundation which has to do with skill acquisition programme such as Tailoring, Carpentries, Welding, Mechanics, Shoe mending. A team of professional bodies were invited by government to trained youths in order to be self- employed. In 2018, the state government in collaboration with Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) gave out loans to youth through Agricultural Bank with the purpose of improving crop production among the youths. Other measures include; Taraba state economic empowerment and development strategy (TSEEDS), Taraba State Feeding Programme (TSFP), State education programme investment project (SEPIP), Taraba state rescue teachers (TSRT) among others, were all programmes that geared towards poverty eradication in the Local Government Area.

Corruption and mismanagement of resources are marred in the implementation of programmes relating to poverty reduction in Sardauna Local Government area by poverty alleviation programme officials. They always put their personal interest at heart while ignoring the large

interest of the youths. It is established that funds approved for certain beneficiaries were diverted to different beneficiaries.

Upon all the measures undertaken to reduce or alleviate poverty among youth in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State, the programmes could not adequately address issues of poverty because most of these programmes failed or were abandoned by Governments in succession. Poverty alleviation programmes were supposed to empower the youths in Sardauna Local Government Areas of Taraba State by creating employment for the youths in communities, facilitate financial services, give youths educational support, social protection, marketing service, mutual aid and labor exchange.

Despite government effort towards poverty alleviation programmes, youth in Sardauna Local Government area are still struggling with poverty in the form of low level of education or skills, high rates of disruptive or disorderly behavior, poor health, and unemployment among others.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to examine Youth Empowerment Scheme under National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State. This will go a long way to identify the challenges facing Youth Empowerment Scheme in Sardauna Local Government Area, to examine the impact of Youth Empowerment Scheme programme in Sardauna Local Government area of Taraba State, to evaluate the effectiveness of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in monitoring Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in Sardauna Local Government Area and to recommend measures of improving poverty alleviation programme with a view to improving the efficiency of Youth Empowerment Scheme, by generating employment and empowering the youth in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are raised to guide this study:

- i. What are the challenges facing Youth Empowerment Scheme in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State?
- ii. What is the impact of Youth Empowerment Scheme on youth in Sardauna local Government Area of Taraba State?
- iii. How effective does the NAPEP Committee supervise YES in Sardauna local Government Area of Taraba State?
- iv. What are the measures to be taking to improve Youth Empowerment Scheme under NAPEP on youth empowerment in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba state?

### **Research Hypothesis**

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significance relationship between poverty alleviation programme and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significance impact between NAPEP monitoring committee and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significance relationship between Youth Empowerment Scheme and the measures taken to improve youth empowerment in Sardauna local government area of Taraba State.

### Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State. The study covered the period (2001– 2020). The study focused on Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) under National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State.

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### Poverty

The term poverty is a description of detestable life which is in need of urgent change. Haralambos & Heald (1980:364) identified poverty to be relative, subjective or absolute. Relative poverty is measured by what members of the society consider desirable and acceptable standard of living within the context of their situations, circumstances, environment and culture. Subjective poverty on the other hand refers to individual or group subjective feeling of being poor. Under subjective poverty, poverty is not measured by the level of income or living standard but by individuals feeling of contentment and sense of fulfilment in life. In absolute terms the definition of poverty is concern with drawing a poverty line below which begins and above which it ends. The line drawn for poverty universally is those spending below \$2 (N612) daily, for an extreme poverty those spending less than \$1 N306 officially exchange rate daily (UNDP, 2017).

According to Bindir, (2002) poverty is a kind of deprivation from something, which every human has a right to have. From the foregoing definition of poverty, when someone is blocked from having access to societal resources, he/she is label as poor. However, this kind of denial to an individual in most societies is mostly indirect. It can be in form of high hospital bill, too much tax e.t.c. According to the World Bank, (2004) “poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living”. This means that even people living around urban areas or in villages are said to be poor if what they earn cannot purchase for them the basic necessities of life. In the same vein, (Zupi, 2007), argued that the elementary aspect of being poor includes hunger, inadequate health care, unhygienic living conditions, and the stress, deprived individual, family, household or group belong sand stain of precarious living.

UNDP, (2011), poverty can also be defined as a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. From this definition we can subsume that poverty is the lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and cloths a family, not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, as well as living in marginal or fragile environments. Defining poverty at “a dollar per day” has been criticized by Chossudovsky. 2003:13 cited in Dansabo (2014). He argued that double standards prevail, in the measurement of poverty. To him, the World Bank’s one dollar a day criterion applies only to developing countries. Both the World Bank and the UNDP fail to acknowledge the existence of poverty in West Europe and North America. Moreover, the idea of all those living below one dollar a day has been criticized on the believe that it is a methodology used by western governments to define and measure poverty in their own country. Chossudovsky (2003) cited in Dansabo (2014) is also of the stand that measuring poverty at a dollar a day is only relative in the western countries and that from his stand, you cannot apply the ideology of people living below one dollar a day to assess poverty in other countries of the world other than the western World.

According to Dansabo (2014), he maintained that when confronted with this reality, what should attract one's mind should be at least a theoretical plane, the diagnoses that have been postulated for this crisis and the prescriptive remedies (Dansabo, 2014)

Poverty is a global phenomenon which is a major policy concern at both domestic and international level. It is a form of deprivation that creates inequality and which requires an address urgently because it is possible to do so with sincerity of purpose. The increasing level of poverty and inequality particularly in the developing world compelled for researches by scholars and international agencies on how to resolve the menace. There is an increasing concern that economic growth is not leading to declining poverty and inequality in most developing countries and the gap between the rich and poor countries is widening Olayemi, (2005)

The most affected region in the world by poverty incidence is Sub-Saharan Africa. The pervasive and chronic nature of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa created a wider vacuum for infrastructure and human development projects (Estache & Wodon, 2014). Growth and economic recovery have been witnessed in Sub-Saharan Africa but the issue is the nature in which these growths and economic progress failed to translate into welfare of the inhabitants of these countries (Arnt, McKay & Tarp, 2016).

Poverty is described as a bomb ready to explode during economic stress (Mukhtar, 2011). The bomb was never defused in high growth period but can explode in period of slow growth, high inflation, rising unemployment and deteriorating social services. He further argued that poverty of opportunity is the problem and not the poverty itself because poverty is the result of poverty of opportunity. Poverty is the deprivation including lack of education, ill-health, social explosion, discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender or religion and political impression, poverty is multidimensional phenomena, not a single dimensional issue.

### **Causes of Poverty**

In Taraba state, there are a number of closely associated factors in the economy and society that combine to create and perpetuate rural poverty; most are internal to the society, but some are external (Khan, 2000). Research has shown that demographic and social factors are in part responsible for the likelihood of people or households falling into poverty. They include:

Household demographics-the size of the household (number of people), the age structure, the dependency ratio and the sex of the household head) and geographical location – rural or urban – are known key determinants of household poverty. Individual characteristics-a person's sex, age, employment status, level of educational attainment, property owned and socio-economic profession are key determinants of poverty (Development Initiative, 2016).

Admittedly, cultural practices are a part of the process and those cultural practices and beliefs impact on the individual choices such that the people openly engage in some unhealthy cultural practice as a matter of lifestyle because the practice is familiar and accepted (Tsoaledi and Takayindisa, 2014).

Polygamy is a state where men increase the number of their off-spring by marrying multiple wives. Polygamy is supported by some for reasons which include power, prestige, labour, and security (Slonim-Nevo and Al-Krenawi, 2006). In Sardauna Local Government, feeding a large family is not a serious challenge but meeting the personal development needs of members of the family is grossly lacking (Black, et. al., 2005) with consequences for dysfunctional behaviours. One of such is the high dependency problem (Khan, 2000; Dadisa, 2014) for which household

income is generally not enough to guarantee the education of the children. This position is supported by the quantity-quality model, which holds that large families have effect on the quality of the children as causal evidence suggest that children from large families have lower average educational levels (Black, et. al., 2005). Worst still, it is evident that children of polygamous families are likely to suffer from emotional, behavioural, and physical problems, negative self-concept, lower school achievement, and greater difficulty in social adjustment than children of monogamous marriages (Slonim-Nevo and Al-Krenawi, 2006; Al-SharfiPfeffer, and Miller, 2015; Pervez and Syeda, 2016). Equally too, there exist the sensitivity of the polygamy-child mortality correlation (Arthi and Fenske 2016).

In local communities in Taraba State, the age brackets between 20 to 29 years are prone to risky behaviour like binge drinking (Dimelu, et. al., 2011; Uchendu, et. al., 2017). The people within these age brackets are the family farm workhorse; so, what affects their health affect farm productivity and the financial stands of the family. Typically, in these peasant agrarian communities burukutu consumptions is taken as breakfast in the morning as a source of energy for daily farming activities especially among the male folk is a norm (Uchendu, et. al., 2017).

Poverty is highly manifest in urban slums and rural communities (Killick, 1981; Schaefer, 2006; Trussell and Mair, 2010; FAO, 2018). The average incidence of urban poverty is 60.2% (Nweke, 2012) while rural poverty is above 80.4% (Eko, et. al., 2013)

However, there are two broad schools of thought to causes of poverty - Low economic growth and Market imperfections. The low economic growth is associated with increased unemployment and underemployment when the income of those affected may generally not be sufficient for them to maintain adequate standard of living. Market imperfection on the other hand has to do with institutional distortions which would not make for equal opportunity to productive assets. They include ignorance, culture and inequitable income distribution. The International Community has in recent years given attention to the study of poverty in the Sub-Saharan African region with a view to identifying the causes in order to provide appropriate solutions. The World Bank has done much work in this area, with studies like "Taking Action for Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1996; and The Social Impact of Adjustment Operations" in 1995. Obadan, (1997).

Corruption is also one of the major causes of poverty, the incidence of corruption has taken a frightening dimension such that Nigeria is now internationally regarded as one of the most if not the most corrupt country in the world. Nigeria is ranked 27, on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), on the 2014 Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The CPI is based on the damaging impact of corruption on human and economic development, and ranks countries according to the extent to which they are perceived round the world as corrupt. The frightening damage to well-being and economic development of corruption is such the World Bank in collaboration with the Transparency International published a book entitled "New perspective on Combating Corruption" in 1998, as means of combating it internationally. (Aku, 1997).

### **Concept of Empowerment**

Empowerment is a means to extend the benefits of socioeconomic and political development in the economy to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas Amadi, O. B. & Abdullah, H. (2012).

More so, "empowerment is seen as a socio-economic or political act by the state or its agencies, private individuals or corporate organization aimed at transforming the socio-economic well-

being of the disempowered. This group includes the rural urban poor, small-scale farmers, the landless and the unemployed, but whose remuneration cannot afford them the basic necessities of life. The group is equally involved the sick and the maimed who cannot have access to quality healthcare services, the illiterate, who have no access to educational facilities and the destitute who cannot afford decent meals and shelter” Amadi, O. B. & Abdullah, H. (2012).

Similarly, Kuti (2006) refers youth empowerment as a form of human development intervention that offers an opportunity for a wide range of vocational skills training for the youths due to their socioeconomic situations which hinders their general wellbeing. It is targeted the training of youths by empowering the youths socially, economically and intervene in their educational pursue and offer a wide range of opportunity for initiating behavioral change in the youth through the guidance and counseling programs aims at putting youths in the proper psychological frame of mind for several encounters ahead in life.

Furthermore, Jimba (2007) states that youth empowerment involves different ways the youth can be facilitated to cause changes in their lifestyle. He maintained that youth empowerment means a way of inculcating into the youths the spirit of the transformation of ideas into creativeness. It is a means of exposing the youths into skills or training that makes them productive. It encompasses different ways youth can be exposed to different trades that may help them to engage in sustainable paid and self-employment. Scholars have held the view that there is a positive relationship between youth empowerment and poverty alleviation on the one hand, and between youth empowerment and national development on the other hand. This is to say that the presence of human development and empowering youth can alleviate poverty and create jobs, especially in developing countries like Nigeria (Hussaini, 2014; Ntiwunka, 2014).

## **APPROACHES TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

### **The Economic Growth Approach**

The economic growth approach to poverty alleviation is based on the assumption that economic deprivation is at the root of all poverty and that non-economic causes of poverty are only secondary, arising from the primary economic causes. this approach focuses on macro and micro economic policies and programmes that would ensure the rapid growth of the economic measured by per capital GDP or per capital national income, rate of growth in production rate of employment, consumer price stability etc. this principle holds that as economic growth continues, the effects will progressively trickle down to the core poor and the most disadvantage in the society e.g. favorable tax measures would directly benefit the poor, favorable import tariff would reduce the cost of imported basic necessities to the poor, investment in rural infrastructure would directly benefit the poor and above all various economic incentives emanating from both macro and micro economic policies would benefit the poor and non-poor although there is no assurance that most of the core poor can take advantages of opportunities offered by various economic incentives, although it has been argued that the economic growth approach is not a sufficient condition though a necessary one for poverty alleviation. Asaju, K. (2011)

### **Basic Need Approach to Poverty Alleviation**

The General basic needs programmes for poverty alleviation are the following:

- i. Economic component to promote broad base economic growth and create employment and income generating opportunities for both poor and non-poor.
- ii. Social services components to provide education health and sanitation services, clean water, nutrition, physical and socio-economic infrastructure, power, supply transport etc.
- iii. Safety-net component, to provide relief for the old, disable and destitute and to provide targeted assistance to the transitorily poor. Asaju, K. (2011)

### **Rural Development Approach to Poverty Alleviation**

The argument is that a sector with such a high percentage of the poor deserves special attention, food is the first basic need of the poor and food production is essentially a rural business, the types and mix of resources available for poverty alleviation intervention in rural areas are different from those in urban areas. This implies that the rural sector usually requires more intensive effort than the urban sector for poverty alleviation. Economic Development in rural areas requires rapid growth in agriculture through the modern inputs and technology and the modernization of farming system and method of farming Organization, but equally important is the need to diversify the economy by using rural Resources to develop non- agricultural, economic activities especially through rural industrialization (Mike, 1996).

### **The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)**

Despite the plethora of poverty alleviation programmes which past governments had initiated and implemented, by 1999 when the Obasanjo administration came to power a world banks report indicated that Nigeria's Human development index (HDI) was only 0.416 and that about 70 percent of the population was vegetating below the bread line. These alarming indicators prompted the government to review the existing poverty alleviation schemes with a view to harmonizing them and improving them. Three presidential panels were set up in this regard they were: the Presidential Panel on the Rationalization and Harmonization of Poverty Alleviation and Agencies headed by Alhaji Ahmed Joda; Presidential Technical Committee on the Review of all Poverty Alleviation programmes headed by Professor Ango Abdullahi; and Committees on Youth Policy, Concept of the youth Empowerment Scheme and the Blueprint for Poverty Eradication Programme headed by professor A.B. Aborishade. The finding and recommendations of these presidential panels coalesced in the formation of the Notional Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in January 2001 (Adekoye, 2010).

### **The Youth Empowerment Scheme**

The Youth Empowerment Scheme popularly tagged Project YES is a registered non-governmental organization initiated by Hajiya Zainab Kure, the former first lady of Niger State. The Scheme which was actually introduced in April 2000 was registered as a non-profit making venture with the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria with registration number RC 13705. According to the initiator and motivator, Hajiya Zainab Kure, Project YES is a form of human development intervention organization which offer opportunity for a wide range of vocational skills training for the youths because of their socio-economic situation (Kuti, 2006). The scheme is targeted at training youths by way of empowering them economically and socially. It is also

expected to intervene in their educational pursuit and also offer an opportunity for initiating behavioral change in the youth through the guidance and counseling programs aimed at putting them in proper psychological frame of mind for many challenges ahead in life. So far, over five thousand youths from the twenty-five local government areas of the state have graduated from various training programs offered by the Project. It is also worthy of note that the graduates of the various trades are usually given startup capital and tools required for the particular trade. Indeed, graduates of the scheme, according to Yahaya, (2006), are not only self-employed but also employers of labor.

Accordingly, Youth Empowerment Scheme functions under the umbrella of the NAPEP is charged with specific mandates to closely plan, monitor and evaluate the relevant activities of NDE, SMIDA, NASCRDB, NIDB and FMBN.

The Youth Empowerment Scheme has a target of job creation and employment opportunities, enterprise development and promotion, Youth participation in Housing schemes and establishment of youth Centres.

### **Youth empowerment scheme activities in Sardauna Local Government**

YES is a form of human development intervention organization which offer opportunity for a wide range of vocational skills training for the youths because of their socio-economic situation (Kuti, 2006). The scheme is targeted at training youths by way of empowering them economically and socially. However, the following were the major skills adopted in Sardauna Local Government Area:

- i. Computer Maintenance and Operation Work
- ii. Tailoring
- iii. Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work
- iv. Furniture Making
- v. Hair Dresser/Barbing
- vi. Carpentry and Joinery
- vii. Bricklaying and Concrete Work (Mason Work)
- viii. Wood Machining Operation
- ix. Catering Services
- x. Photograph and Video Coverage
- xi. Dyeing and Bleaching
- xii. Radio, Television and Appliances Repairs
- xiii. Plumbing and Pipe fitting
- xiv. Okada (commercial Motorcycling Services)
- xv. Poultry Farming
- xvi. Trading
- xvii. Textile trade
- xviii. Bakery making
- xix. Animal Rearing
- xx. GSM Telephone Services
- xxi. Shoe making
- xxii. Blacksmithing
- xxiii. Soap making

## Challenges of Youth Empowerment Programmes

Like any other programs in Nigeria, Youth empowerment scheme has its own peculiar challenges these include the followings:

**Lack of government commitment:** Many graduates in Nigeria are roaming on the streets without anything reasonable job to do for a living. The government is capable but unwilling to provide jobs for them this leaves many highly qualified people in poverty as seemingly no one cares to know what they are capable of achieving in life. Most of the government policy frameworks on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation are not realistic and unproductive. The rates of unemployment have induced poverty in the country which has a tendency to increase the crime rate and violence among youth in the society. Statistics have shown that the country rate of unemployment from 2007 to 2014 is frightening, the record shows a rapid increase from 13.1 percent in 2000, rose to 19.7 percent in 2009 and 23.9 percent in 2011 to 28.5 percent in 2013 up to 30 percent in 2014 respectively (NBS, 2014).

**Corruption:** Corruption is generally acknowledged as having adversely affected previous poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria, it has eaten so deeply into the government, public funds that were earmarked for developmental projects are being misappropriated on a daily basis by the leaders, who always put their personal interest at heart while ignoring the large interest of masses in the country. They mismanage and embezzle public funds that are meant for poverty related programs. There are several issues involved with bad governance in Nigeria, use of wrong policies adopted from the western countries and implementation of those wrong policies which has a direct effect on the general wellbeing of the citizens. In any case, it is clear that corruption in Nigeria has increased poverty and inequality as well as contributed to the high rate of crime in the country.

**Laziness:** this is a common disease which is virtually suffered by many Nigerians youth today, especially those from wealthy households. Everyone wants to be comfortable but they are not ready to work towards their self-empowerment and development. This is one of the critical factors that hinder the youth empowerment scheme in Nigeria where the majority of the youth are dependent on their parents or relatives which indirectly discourage self-reliance among the majority of the youth. Waziri& Abu, (2014).

**Poor Educational Development System:** Education plays a vital role in reducing poverty globally. According to the World Bank, education is central to development. It promotes economic growth, national productivity and innovation, and values of democracy and social cohesion. In Nigeria, the high level of illiteracy among the populace is so alarming that need a serious government and nongovernmental attention. The education system in Nigeria can be regarded as a failure compared to other countries in the world. This right to education has been denied to many Nigerians, of which many of them can be considered invisible to the society now. This deprivation of education applies more to females than males because they are considered inferior sex. This has greatly contributed to the challenges of youth empowerment in Nigeria as the majority of the youth do not attain any educational qualification.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **False Paradigm Model Theory**

This work adopts the theory of False Paradigm Model Theory propounded by Claude Ake in 1996. The False Paradigm Model Theory is the theory of “Distorted Policies” postulated by Claude Ake (1996) in his work “Democracy and Development in Africa” presumed that development is an agenda that was never even started in Africa by its leaders right from the inception. He argued that, Africa in general has the potential for development and extricating itself from the malaise of poverty, underdevelopment, backwardness, illiteracy, disease and other indicators of instability but, the leaders on assuming power after political independence digressed policies from pursuing development agenda to wild goose chase of elephant projects that are not sincerely targeted for national development and which do not target the African populace in their approach and nature.

Africa is blessed with all the natural resources that can be utilised for national development programmes with crude oil, gold, diamond, zinc, uranium, iron, agricultural products, oceans, rivers, dams, population and a friendly weather. This should be accompanied with hard work, dedication, good governance and sincerity of purpose for proper development agenda. However, all these resources were squandered and misutilised by the African leaders after they secured power from the colonialists. Instead of identifying projects and policies that will target the poor such as quality education, improved healthcare services delivery, addressing diseases and other social problems, the African leaders-initiated policies and projects that are not meant for genuine development. An example of such is Nigeria which is the richest and populous country in Africa which earned billions of petrodollars accruing from oil boom in the 1970s and 1980s but the money was wasted in sponsoring elephant projects and less relevant developmental programmes, including sponsoring FESTAC sport activities in 1977, hosting of Commonwealth games and other projects that do not have any impact on the common man (Ake, 1996:67).

### **Empirical Review**

Research conducted by Emanuel, and Muhammed (2009), on youth empowerment found that the opinion of the respondents shows a clear indication of the great impact of Project YES in alleviating poverty in Niger State, which is also similar the current one in Sardauna Local Government Area. This agrees with the findings of Yahaya, (2006) who also observed that the impact of Project YES goes beyond the issue of poverty alleviation alone because it has also intervened in the educational pursuit of thousands of youths. As such, the youth were opportune to develop their talents, self-esteem and become useful and acceptable members of the society.

Also, Babayo and Umar (2019) argued that National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as a means of training and empowering people to be self-reliant for poverty eradication failed to actualize its ambition because of problems associated with it. Many youths were trained but could not be given adequate skill required or empowerment after the training in terms of capital for a start. The beneficiaries were not better than before since no bold measures were taken to ensure that they depend on themselves after the programme is finished.

It is also discovered by Babayo and Umar (2019) that, despite the increase in revenue generation capacity in Nigeria, the poverty rate has not decrease instead, it has increased. There is population explosion which the policy-makers are not paying attention to. Policy of poverty eradication like NAPEP needs to consider population projection which it failed to do. While NAPEP target youth

and majority male section of the population, the old ones, children and women were neglected and these are the portions mostly affected by poverty.

Isioma and Evans (2018). The study discovered that the youth roles in the PM&E activities were inconsequential. They were only consulted when the implementers deemed it necessary. The youth were bystanders and not treated as partners who are empowered enough to actively participate in the PM&E activities. This gave a negative deviation of 1.45 (-1.45). The majority of the respondents also indicated that their marginal involvement in the PM&E process with regards to data collection had not empowered them to any degree. The variable also assumed a negative deviation after a further analysis was conducted (1.52). Young people should have the opportunity to voice out their concerns and offer tangible remedies in any development policies rather than being mere receivers of development interventions perceived by development planners as comprehensive enough to address their problems.

### **Gaps in the Literatures**

Most literatures only focus on the causes of poverty such as lack of education, unequal distribution of natural resources, corruption, etc. The scholars have failed to look into the dual culture of Africans and Nigerians in particular which have abandoned African way of life and embrace the costly western way of life. The western culture is one of the factors of affecting Nigerian indigenous development, one can no longer use our local products which is cheaper and affordable, while the westerns products are always cost. For instance, it takes an American less than an hour to produce a car, and it will take an African or Nigerian 3 to 4 years gathering money to buy the same car that was fabricated in less than an hour. This gap is also one of the factors retrograding developing countries. The disequilibrium of price between the western world and third world countries is exploitative and unfavourable to developing countries.

Many scholars including those from Taraba State have failed to carry out research in Taraba State on poverty eradication and youth empowerment which is one of the world wide focus of daily discussion. However, this research has filled up such a gap.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This research adopts a survey research method. This method focuses on population or the universe in which data collected from the said population are used for intensive study and analysis. A sample from a subset of population or universe is carefully selected to represent the characteristic of the population.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprises the beneficiaries of Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in the eleven (11) wards found in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State. According to Social Welfare Section Sardauna Local Government Area, there were 1500 youth partaking in the activities of Youth Empowerment Scheme.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The population of the study was drawn from the beneficiaries of Youth Empowerment Scheme in eleven (11) wards of Sardauna Local Government of Taraba State with a total population of

beneficiaries of 1,500. Obtained from social welfare in Sardauna Local Government. From the total number of One Thousand Five Hundred (1,500) people in Sardauna Local Government Area, to obtain the sample the size, the research used the Taro-Yamare's expression formalaras thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where;

n = sample size

N = total population

e = accepted sampling error, 95% confidence level

Note: e = 5%  $\approx$  0.05

$$n = \frac{1,500}{1 + 1,500(0.05^2)}$$

$$= \frac{1500}{1501(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{1500}{3.7525}$$

$$= 399.73 \approx 400$$

n = sample size 400

The population stood at 400 persons who were drawn irrespective of gender and status, but learned and informed respondents.

### **Instrument of Data Collection**

Data was obtained through the primary and secondary sources. Close ended and opened ended questionnaire was structured on five Likert's scale rating points. This involved Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) were used to measure respondents' responses. On the other hand, secondary sources were obtained from books, journals, articles, internet materials, unpublished thesis and other paper presentation in relation to the subject matter.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

This study employed descriptive survey statistics of frequency counts, table of variables and percentages in its analysis and Chi-Square was used in testing the hypotheses. The decision rule for interpreting the chi-square is that; where the computed value is greater than critical value at appropriate level of degree of freedom (*df*) and significance level of, therefore, the null hypothesis (*H<sub>0</sub>*) will be rejected and alternate hypothesis (*H<sub>i</sub>*) would be accepted and vice versa. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis.

### **Study Area**

**Taraba State was created on August, 27<sup>th</sup> 1991 when the General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida military administration curved it out of the defunct Gongola State. The State drives its name from river Taraba and is made up of sixteen (16) Local Government Areas and two Special Development Areas (SDAs). These areas constitute the administrative units in three (3) geographical zones (Taraba State Government Official Website).**

Taraba is regarded as nature's gift to the Nation because of its abundant natural resource's endowment. The state is well endowed with abundant solid mineral resources, surface water resources, arable and grazing land. The major occupation of the people of Taraba State is agriculture. Sardauna Local government Area is one of the sixteen (16) Local Government in Taraba State. It located in the extreme South-East of Taraba State. It sits atop the Mambilla Plateau. It was created on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1960. Gembu is its Headquarters, and it is boarded to the Northern part of Gashaka Local Government Area, to the Eastern part of Takum Local Government Area and to the South part of Republic of Cameroon. Other metropolitan town within the local government include: Nguroje, Maisamari, Mbamnga and Mayo-Ndaga.

### Test of hypothesis

#### Hypotheses Statements

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significance relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significance impact between NAPEP monitoring committee and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significance relationship between Youth Empowerment Scheme and the measures taken to improve youth empowerment in Sardauna local government area of Taraba State.

**Decision Rule:** The rule states that when the computed chi-square is greater than the table value, we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>), contrary to this we accept the null hypothesis

### Test of Hypothesis (1)

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significance relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.

Questions 4, 5 and 6 were used to test hypothesis (1)

The computed  $\chi^2 = 194.23$

$$\begin{aligned} df &= (r-1)(c-1) \\ &= (5-1)(3-1) \\ &= (4)(2) \\ &= 8 \\ df &= 8 \end{aligned}$$

The hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance, where df = 8 and table value of chi-square is 21.955

Since the computed chi-square is greater than the table value, we therefore reject the null hypothesis. This implies that there is significance relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.

### Test of Hypothesis (2)

- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significance impact between NAPEP monitoring committee and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.

Question 7, 8 and 9 were used to test hypothesis (2)

The computed  $\chi^2 = 1093.23$

$$\begin{aligned} df &= (r-1)(c-1) \\ &= (5-1)(3-1) \\ &= (4)(2) \\ &= 8 \\ df &= 8 \end{aligned}$$

The hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance, where  $df = 8$  and table value of chi-square is 21.955

Since the computed chi-square is greater than the table value, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative. This implies that there is significance impact between NAPEP monitoring committee and youth empowerment in Sardauna local Government area of Taraba state.

### Test of Hypothesis (3)

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significance relationship between Youth Empowerment Scheme and the measures taken to improve youth empowerment in Sardauna local government area of Taraba State.

Question 13, 14 and 15 were used to test hypothesis (3)

The computed  $\chi^2 = 272.03$

$$\begin{aligned} df &= (r-1)(c-1) \\ &= (5-1)(3-1) \\ &= (4)(2) \\ &= 8 \\ df &= 8 \end{aligned}$$

The hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance, where  $df = 8$  and table value of chi-square is 21.955

Since the computed chi-square is greater than the table value, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative which states that there is significance relationship between Youth Empowerment Scheme and the measures taken to improve youth empowerment in Sardauna local government area of Taraba State.

### Summary of findings

After the analysis, the following findings were found:

- i. It was found that the majority of respondents are between the age range of 23-37 years with SSCE holders as the highest qualification, and are mostly singles.
- ii. That funds and materials provided for the running of youth empowerment programmes are sometimes diverted and some youths are uncommitted to the programmes coupled with poor educational background.
- iii. That there is a significance relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and youth empowerment, despite that Youth Empowerment Scheme has not reduced the rate of unemployment, but the level of poverty has been reduced Youth Empowerment Scheme has also increased the level of economy despite the fact that there was no much of jobs created through the skills.
- iv. That there is significance impact between NAPEP monitoring committee and youth empowerment, and that the committee of National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) does not establish youth empowerment skills by making feasibility studies for a suitable

skills for youth, but provides mechanism and necessary supports for the implementation of programmes with the transfer of cash to the beneficiaries to ease their activities. The committee also monitor and supervises Youth Empowerment Scheme activities bi-monthly and send a report to the national coordinator of NAPEP.

- v. That there is significance relationship between Youth Empowerment Scheme and the measures taken to improve youth empowerment when they are supported with stipend, free and compulsory education, and establish skill acquisition centers of different skills all over Sardauna local government for free participation.

### **Discussion of findings**

In order to deal with the problem of ineffective targeting of the poor (leading to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries), unwieldy scope of programmes, lack of involvement of beneficiaries social partners and other stakeholders in planning and evaluation and top – bottom approach in programme planning and implementation, the Federal Government established the NAPEC which serves as the secretariat of NAPEP headed by a national coordinator who is the chairman of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) and report directly to the President. There are state coordinators who also head the state coordination committees which coordinate all poverty eradication of all Federal Agencies in the relevant states. In each Local Government Area, a Local Government Monitoring Committee is established to facilitate effective implementation of NAPEP intervention initiatives. The target of the National Poverty Eradication Programme is to completely wipe out poverty from Nigeria by the year 2015, in line with Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), to halve the proportion of those in poverty by 2015.

However, a critical assessment of NAPEP revealed that it is concentrated more on Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) neglecting the other mandate. It has also been observed by (Mukhtar, 2008, p.197) that, most of the poor people have not participated in NAPEP programmes due to lack of access to social and economic infrastructure provided to improved human capital, mostly the local people were not included in the identification of projects meaning that the ones identified were in most cases, inappropriate and unsustainable.

NAPEP was plagued by monumental and persistent deficiencies including: (a) corruption, nepotism and lack of transparency (b) over centralization of planning and implementation (c) unsustainable design (d) irregular payment of beneficiaries (e) mismanagement of public funds and (f) lack of logistics for proper monitoring and evaluation (Ajakaiye, 2002, p.6)

Magaji (2005, p.35) argued that, the current poverty eradication policies are micro in nature addressing the only household poverty level. For instance, by training the thousands of people and giving stipends, poverty eradication might not occur as expected. Nevertheless, what if a hundred thousand persons are drive below the poverty line within the period, because of poor microeconomic policy? The net poverty eradication becomes minus ninety thousand people, which means an additional ninety thousand are pushed down to poverty level.

### **Summary**

This research work assesses poverty alleviation programme and youth empowerment in Nigeria with reference to Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State. Four research questions and three hypotheses were formulated based on the objectives of the study. The population of the study comprises of 400 youth beneficiaries selected

in eleven (11) wards in Sardauna Local Government Area. The survey method was used to analyse data obtained from respondents through the use of Likert rating scale in form of simple percentage. The analysis found that there is a significance relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and youth empowerment, despite that Youth Empowerment Scheme has not reduced the rate of unemployment, but the level of poverty has been reduced. Youth Empowerment Scheme has also increased the level of economy despite the fact that there was no much jobs created through the skills. That there is significance impact between NAPEP monitoring committee and youth empowerment, and that the committee of National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) does not establish youth empowerment skills by making feasibility studies for a suitable skills for youth, but provides mechanism and necessary supports for the implementation of programmes with the transfer of cash to the beneficiaries to easy their activities. The committee also monitor and supervises Youth Empowerment Scheme activities bi-monthly and send a report to the national coordinator of NAPEP. That funds and materials provided for the running of youth empowerment programmes are sometimes diverted and some youths are uncommitted to the programmes coupled with poor educational background. These were some of the challenges facing youth empowerment scheme in the study area.

### **Conclusion**

Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) is a veritable tool for poverty alleviation in Sardauna Local government Area which involves different ways through which the youths were empowered to achieve self-sustained development instead of depending on the government to provide them with job opportunities. In addition, the government should embark upon massive youth development programs in all state of the federation with entrepreneurship development as key intervening tools for youth empowerment. It is believed that exposing youth into different vocational skills acquisition will enhance sustainable income, as well as the socio-economic development of the country.

This is possible when there is willingness and the culture of creating ideas instilled into the youths to make them productive and self-reliant members of society. This is very important for the government to ensure that all policies and programs are been in line with the people demands, and must be properly implemented. Similarly, public funds meant for any developmental programs must be properly monitored and entirely accounted for by the related agency involved in order to avoid misappropriation of public funds.

### **Recommendations**

In line with the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Governments should encourage individuals, philanthropists and philanthropic organizations to set up poverty alleviation related NGOs to supplement their efforts in fighting the scourge of poverty in Sardauna Local Government and Nigeria at large.
- ii. Governments should contribution in form of provision and training centers/workshops and link it to international donor organizations like the USAID, UNDP, UNESCO, and UNICEF. After training the participants should be given a startup capital to establish a business based on the skills acquired.
- iii. The Youth Empowerment Scheme (Project YES) should set up offices across the local governments in the state in other to extend her services to the grass roots.

- iv. Counseling sessions should be organized for participants at a time. It should be more private and more confidential. Similarly, referral and follow-up services should be introduced in order to allow for effective counseling for the trainees. Areas of weakness and strength should critically be identified, studied with the hope of implementing the recommendations as a way of improving the programmes designed for the trainees.

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