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Exploring the contributions of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on poverty reduction in Nigeria: a focus on the n-power beneficiaries' perspectives in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria

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EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NATIONAL SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (NSIP) ON POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA: A FOCUS ON THE N-POWER BENEFICIARIES' PERSPECTIVES IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT), NIGERIA

A report on a research study presented to

The Department of Social Work

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Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

In partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree Master of Arts by Course Work and Research Report in the field of Social Development

by

Freda Ene Ukpoju

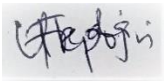
15 March 2023

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own original and unaided work, and that all sources used have been properly cited. Ethics protocol number is SW23/01/05. This research report has never been submitted before for a degree or examination.

Freda Ene Ukpoju

Date



15th March 2023

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LIST OF ACRONYMNS

DFID	Department of International Development
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
IMF	International Monetary Funds
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NSIP	National Social Investment Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
WB	World Bank

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the epidemic of poverty has lingered despite world collaborations on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030, to bring poverty to the barest minimum of less than 3% in 2030 (World Bank, 2022). Regionally, efforts are also being made to bring an end to poverty. The African Union, for instance, launched its Agenda 2063 in January 2015, with focus on enabling high standard of living and building a prosperous, united and. sustainable African continent by 2063 (African Union, 2022). Since then, African leaders have moved further to develop national strategies that will lead each country to realise these goals, prioritising poverty eradication and development in the continent.

Globally, countries like China, Malaysia and India have made remarkable progress in lifting millions of their populations out of poverty in a relatively short time, through empowerment programmes, adjustments to social policy, and improved economic reforms (Sangui et al, 2004). In Africa, countries like Tanzania through its economic recovery programme achieved growth in per capita income, leading to a significant decline in poverty level (Sangui, et al., 2004). Namibia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia are also making giant strides toward eradicating poverty (World Bank, 2019). However, other developing countries, including Nigeria, have been unsuccessful in their efforts to reduce their poverty rates.

Nigeria has always battled with poverty. Thus, it has been implementing poverty alleviation programmes since the return to democracy in 1999. The country took a bold step in 2016 by targeting to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in the next 10 years (2026), thus, launching the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) as its poverty eradication strategy (NSPP, 2021). The NSIP consists of four components, namely the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSF), and the N-Power programme, which is a youth empowerment programme designed to enhance relevant skills that will boost the productivity and employability of the unemployed Nigerian youth, (NSPP, 2021). It is worthy of note that six years down the line, Nigeria still has one of the highest poverty rates (as per the national poverty line), estimated at 45.2% with many its population living in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2021).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In 2018 Nigeria became the world's poverty capital (Brookings, 2018, December 13). Many factors are attributed to the worsened poverty situation of the country, ranging from several decades of socio-economic and political crises, security challenges, inequality, unemployment (Onyeiwu, 2021) and recently the Covid 19 pandemic that worsened unemployment and inflation for the country. According to the World Poverty Clock (2022) Nigeria will have 39% of its population in extreme poverty (population living less than the US $1 per day) by the end of 2022. As a country that has its highest population as youth, high unemployment among the youth remains a major contributing factor to and the driving force for poverty. Thus, Nigeria continues to focus on youth empowerment and social assistance programmes as strategies for poverty alleviation.

Many studies (Akande, 2014; Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021; Onah & Oliseh 2019; Oyewo, 2021; Abovu & Chintuwa, 2019) have assessed the performance of the various poverty alleviation programmes by the Nigeria government, by investigating their challenges and prospects. Majority of these studies examined their content, structure, and implementation to ascertain their suitability for poverty eradication. However, the experiences of the beneficiaries in terms of how these programmes have sustainably transformed their living condition is yet to be fully explored. Few studies (Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021; Oyekunle, 2021) have examined beneficiaries' perspectives on the impact of poverty alleviation programmes on their living condition, but the studies failed to establish how sustainable the impact has been on the livelihood of the beneficiaries. While it is important to examine the effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes, there is also the need to ensure that poverty alleviation programmes that are repackaged in successive administrations, as it is the case with Nigeria, or financed by international donors, are successful in transforming lives on a sustainable basis. Hence, the voice of the beneficiaries becomes important in providing specific details to ascertain the performance and impact of poverty alleviation programmes, and to determine the necessary adjustments to programme design that will fit the needs of the target population and translate to more successful outcomes.

1.3 STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Nigeria has continued to roll out different poverty alleviation programmes, yet poverty rate has failed to drop. There seem to be more focus on rolling out more poverty alleviation programmes than monitoring the impact and determining the effectiveness of these interventions

to improve the standard of living for their beneficiaries, and the sustainability thereof. Thus, there is insufficient data to determine whether beneficiaries of the NSIP, particularly, the N-Power empowerment programme are sustainably exiting poverty, falling back into poverty, or if the intervention had previously lifted them out of poverty.

Similarly, existing studies on poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria focus on exploring the structural challenges of implementing these programmes. Hence, the voices of the beneficiaries are missing to confirm the effectiveness of these programmes on the beneficiaries livelihoods or the appropriateness of the programmes or whether these programmes contributes to poverty reduction plan of the country.

It was anticipated that this study would provide relevant data that would demonstrate the impact of the N-Power programme on the livelihood of its beneficiaries in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). This study prioritised the beneficiaries as the focus of the N-Power programme, thus, it provided knowledge on what works or does not work in lifting individuals out of poverty in Nigeria. The peculiarities of the beneficiaries' experience provided important nuances on the nature of poverty in Nigeria and led to the understanding of the best approach to poverty eradication in Nigeria. While it is important to understand the systemic factors inhibiting implementation of poverty alleviation programmes, it is more important to know how successful the programmes have been in transforming livelihoods, from the lived experiences of beneficiaries, of these programmes. This study contributed to the knowledge base on the successful implementation of the N-Power programme.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study was guided by the following question:

What are the perspectives of FCT beneficiaries on N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of beneficiaries in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria on the contribution of the N-Power component of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

It sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the experiences of FCT beneficiaries on N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.
2. To determine the perceptions of N-Power FCT beneficiaries on factors impeding N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.
3. To explore the perceptions of N-Power FCT beneficiaries on what factors might improve N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.
4. To highlight examples where N-Power contributed to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

1.6 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

It was anticipated that the findings from this study would provide important insight for government and the Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) in determining appropriate poverty alleviation interventions and adequate guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of the programmes to avoid repackaging the same ineffective programmes that fail to transform the living condition of people living in poverty. Through the findings of this study government would be encouraged to address the root causes of poverty rather than promoting a quick-fix solution that serve political interest. Government would also be urged to intensify efforts to make noticeable strides toward achieving the SDG on poverty reduction, that targets the eradication of all forms of poverty by 2030, through an appropriate implementation of social protection system for all (United Nations, 2015). Likewise, strive to achieve the continent's aspirations for 2063 on ensuring improved standard of living and well-being for the entire population in the country (African Union Commission (AUC), 2015).

In addition, it was expected that the study would add to existing knowledge on social development practice in Nigeria in general and particularly, on programmatic interventions, to consider the appropriateness of these interventions. By exploring the experiences of the beneficiaries, it provided rich data from another stakeholder perspective which would be useful to consider in ascertaining the ideal poverty alleviation programmes and when developing appropriate guidelines for implementing a successful programme intervention. This would also

help to assess whether programmes should be scaled up, expanded, or scraped. Considering beneficiaries experiences and perceptions, would also promote sustainability thinking around programmatic interventions in Nigeria. Reflecting on the sustainability of existing programmes might result in looking beyond duplicating short term, once-off interventions to more comprehensive and all-encompassing interventions with sustainability as the envisaged outcome that will move beneficiaries progressively from one level of successful intervention to another, in their struggle to break the cycle of poverty and eventually exit poverty.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using the qualitative method of research to gather subjective data from selected beneficiaries of the N-Power programme residing in Gwagwalada and Abuja Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in Nigeria. A multiple case study design was adopted to explore beneficiaries' personal experiences on the impact of N-Power on their livelihoods and create a deeper understanding of poverty and poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique was used to select ten participants, however, two participants withdrew from the research, thus, eight participants were engaged, and the method of data collection was one-on-one in-depth interviews.

The semi-structured interview guide was pretested, then used to explore the experiences and perceptions of participants that yielded in collecting in-depth and rich data. Greeff (2005) pointed out that an interview guide includes the primary questions, probing questions, and follow-up questions. Participants were able to offer deeper interpretations since there was a set of questions that clearly defined the regions to be addressed. Data was analysed using the reflexive thematic analyses to produce subjective meaning from the data generated, and the analysis was using the six-phase process for conducting reflexive thematic analysis. This according to Brauke and Clarke, (2006) and Byrne, (2021) involves the process of familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, generating themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and finally, producing report.

1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.8.1 Multidimensional poverty

According to the World Bank (2022) multidimensional poverty is the manifestation of poverty which is beyond monetary deprivation to include other areas like education, health, and basic infrastructure critical to the wellbeing of the human being. The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) (2018), describes multidimensional poverty as multiple deprivations that confront people living in poverty daily, especially in areas of health, education, and empowerment. These deprivations, impact their standard of living, access to quality work and expose them to violence because they have no choice but to make their homes in unsafe environment.

1.8.2 N-Power

N-Power is a component of the NSIP that targets job creation and skills acquisition and enhancement for young people between the age of 18 and 35 in Nigeria. N-Power has two categories of programmes, namely a non-graduate programme and a graduate programme. The non-graduate programme focusses on building youth capacities in specific industries like building construction, aluminium, and gas. The graduate programme trains school graduate individuals to enhance their skills in agriculture, education, technology, health, and other specialised areas (Oyewo, 2021). In this research study participants from the non-graduate and graduate programmes were selected.

1.8.3. National Social Investment Programme (NSIP)

According to Baines et.al. (2020) social investment programmes are government designed programmes and initiatives that are intended to better the living condition of citizens by improving their productive capacities. The NSIP is a social investment programme of the Nigerian government launched in 2016 to address widespread poverty and hunger by improving the productive potential of its citizens. The NSIP encapsulates four independent programmes, known as the "NSIP programme suites" targeting small businesses, the youth, children and the "poorest of the poor" (NSIP, 2018). The programme suite consists of N-Power, a youth empowerment and skill acquisition programme, National Homegrown School Feeding Programme for primary school children, Conditional Cash Transfer to support those in extreme poverty, and the Government

Enterprise and Empowerment Programme to support small businesses with low interest loans (State house, nd).

1.8.4 Poverty

There are varied definitions of poverty because of the relativity of the concept. Nyasulu (2010) considers poverty as a violation of human rights or the dignity of the human spirit, hence defines it as the inability to affect change in one's life, often due to the absence of opportunities and resources that can improve a person's living condition. The World Bank defines poverty in terms of monetary deprivation and a lack in essential areas like education and health, including being vulnerable to risks, helpless and not having a voice. (World Development Report, 2021). For this study, the definition of poverty was informed by Taiwo and Agwu (2016), who considered poverty as manifesting in a multidimensional form. They explain poverty as the inability of an individual to meet their basic needs, be gainfully employed, have skills, assets, and self-esteem, as well as limited access to education and healthcare services, portable water, and good sanitation, and with a slim possibility of improving their welfare beyond the scope of their potentials and possibilities (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016).

1.8.5 Sustainable Livelihood

Sustainable livelihoods refer to the sustainability of the means of living, in other words, will the ability of the means of livelihoods stand the test of time. Livelihoods according to Krantz (2001) are set of capabilities, assets, and activities that individuals require to earn a living. Thus, a livelihood is sustainable when it can deal with, and survive stresses and shocks and still maintain its capabilities and assets, and activities both now and in the future, without weakening the natural resource base (Krantz, 2001). For this study, sustainable livelihood is considered to be the sustainability of the means of living, which is determined by understanding the factors that can limit or strengthen the capacities of those in poverty, to support themselves in a way that is socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable.

1.8.6 Youth Empowerment

Empowerment is a broad concept used in different fields including psychotherapy and social work, and the definition is therefore often contextualised. Page and Czuba (1999) understand empowerment as a multifaceted approach to assist individuals in taking charge of their lives. For

Tengland (2008), the concept is either used as a goal (an achievement) or a process (a method, means or approach). As a goal it connotes gaining control over the contributing factors of an individual's quality of life, in the form of knowledge, skills development and self-esteem. As a process, empowerment can be seen as creating a professional relation where the individual or community in need of support, takes control over the change process, determining both the goals of the process and the method to use. Adams (2003) also regards empowerment as the process by which individuals or communities learn to take charge of their situation and achieve their own goals. As a result, they can work to improve their own lives as well as others.

For this study, empowerment was perceived as the means of gaining control over one's quality of life and able to assist other people improve their quality of living. Therefore, in this study, youth empowerment refers to government's interventions designed to improve the skills and capabilities of the unemployed young people between the ages of 18-35, to enable them taking charge of their lives, by participating in productive and meaningful economic activities to improve their livelihoods and quality of life for themselves and their households.

1.9 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had the following limitations:

- The N-Power programme is a broad scheme with different components implemented nationwide in at least two groups, targeting 500 thousand beneficiaries in each group. Due to the high number of beneficiaries and a nationwide implementation that cuts across 36 states including the FCT in Nigeria. For this study, only beneficiaries from Gwagwalada and Abuja Municipal Area Council in the FCT were considered.

- Beneficiaries from the FCT WhatsApp group were reluctant to respond to the recruitment message posted on their WhatsApp group to solicit for their participation. Therefore, I resorted to making random individual calls to members of the group to inform them about the study and explored their willingness to voluntary participate in the study.

- Some beneficiaries shortlisted for the N-Power programme did not actively participate in the training or follow through with the process. Some are ghost beneficiaries, who received

stipends and disappear. Avoiding sampling these beneficiaries, participants were selected from the WhatsApp group created for active beneficiaries. Purposive sampling narrowed down the population and ensured that participating beneficiaries were/are active members who have been influenced by N-Power programme. Only participants who underwent training and skills acquisition programme were selected.

- The purpose of the study was not to generalise the findings of the study. The data collected and findings of the study contextualise the deeper meaning and understanding of the influence of N-Power programme on individual beneficiaries as it relates to their livelihoods and influence on their socio-economic condition.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter one provided an overview and the layout of the study. In Chapter two the theoretical framework is described, and the literature review presented. The review examines the nature of poverty, poverty in the context of Nigeria; poverty reduction strategy and social investment programmes; the relationship between empowerment and poverty reduction, and the N-Power as Nigeria poverty reduction strategy. Chapter three describes the research design and methodology applied during the research study. In Chapter four the analysed data are presented and discussed. The main findings, conclusion and recommendations are highlighted in Chapter five.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents the theoretical framework for the study and a review of relevant literature on poverty and its multidimensional nature. It examines poverty in the context of Nigeria and extensively discusses the national social investment programme (NSIP) as Nigeria's strategy for poverty reduction in the country. In addition, the N-Power programme as the Nigerian strategy for youth empowerment and poverty reduction is elaborated on, and the relationship between empowerment programmes and sustainable poverty reduction is examined.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was grounded on the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA). This approach was introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development and modified by researchers from the Institute of Development Studies in the UK and the British Department for International Development (DFID) (Krantz, 2001). The early users like the international donor agencies, UNDP, CARE International and DFID, deployed SLA either as a structure for programmatic interventions or framework for analysing or assessing the impact of poverty alleviation programmes (Krantz, 2001; UNDP, 2019). The SLA holds that the general goal of poverty reduction strategy should be the achievement of sustainable livelihood outcomes for individuals living in poverty (Krantz, 2001), rather than implementing a quick-fix intervention (Serrat, 2017). It considers sustainable livelihood as the ability of an individual's human, natural, physical, financial, and social assets to withstand stress and shocks and maintain productivity without destroying the natural base in the future (Krantz, 2001).

The SLA considers individuals and their assets or resources to be most important in designing, implementing, and evaluating antipoverty programmes (Kollmair & Juli, 2002). SLA implies that poverty reduction programmes should support and enhance the existing assets and capabilities of people to ensure they can take care of themselves and their households in a sustainable manner. To this approach, individuals make their choices and strategies for exiting poverty based on resources available to them, thus, antipoverty programmes should focus on broadening their choices by enhancing individuals' capabilities or assets so that they can lift

themselves out of poverty and maintain sustainable livelihood opportunity for the next generation (Morse & McNamara, 2013).

SLA is guided by some principles captured by Krantz (2001) which were considered important to this study. The first principle to consider is that poverty alleviation interventions should be people-centred, focusing on what matters to them, understanding group peculiarities, and working with them in a way that is in line with their current livelihood strategies, social environment, and ability to adapt. In addition, it emphasises that interventions should be responsive to the views of the poor and be participatory by ensuring people living in poverty take the lead in identifying and addressing livelihood challenges. The second principle of SLA is that poverty-focused intervention should be multi-levelled to ensure that micro level activities inform policy formation, are supported by well-organised enabling environment, and macro-level or external structures and processes enable people to build or improve on their own strength. The third principle holds that interventions should involve public and private sector in partnership. In addition, it should be sustainable economically, environmentally, institutionally, socially, and dynamic. By dynamic, SLA acknowledges that people's situation can change. As such, interventions should be flexible enough to recognise that and develop longer term commitments that are adaptable. Ultimately, for SLA, the goal for any poverty intervention is to maximise livelihood for the poor (Krantz, 2001; UNDP, 2017).

The rationale behind the SLA is that people are better informed about their poverty situation, and they experience poverty in a more complex or multidimensional way, which may be unknown to a donor agency or the government, and they employ other strategies to maximise income, minimise risks and protect things that they value (Parkinson & Ramirez, 2007). Therefore, antipoverty programmes by government or donor agencies are unlikely to serve the interest of the people in poverty or make real impact. If the government or donor agencies fail to design the programme from the perspective of the people living in poverty, acknowledging, and maximising their existing assets, and providing the right support, based on their priorities, the programmes are likely to fail. This then implies that a sustainable livelihood analysis should fully engage the people to give them opportunities to voice their knowledge, perceptions, and interests (Krantz, 2001). Thus, SLA interrogates what is important to poor people, what type of assets or resources they

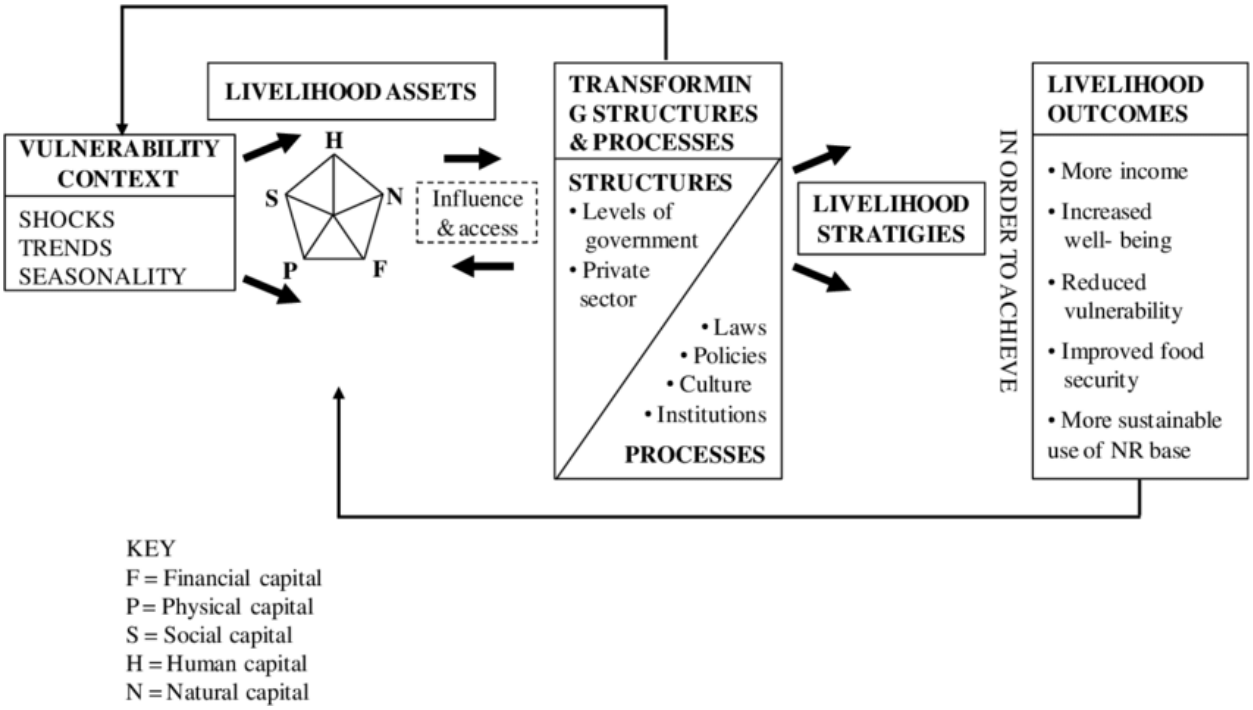
have, how they use them to forge their livelihood, how interventions affect their resources and ways they interact with those resources (DFID, 2001).

Parkinson and Ramirez (2007) in their study that analysed the impact of the internet assessed through the telecentre, on social equity and development, at Aguablanca in Columbia, appraised the SLA for its ability to identify unanticipated impact. They claimed that the framework created a "big picture context" that looked at the peculiarities of the beneficiaries in terms of their existing behaviours and resources and how they related Information Communication Technology (ICT) to their own reality, rather than a one-way cause-effect thinking that generalised people's experiences, impacts, and outcome perceived from the planners' point of view. The SLA allowed for deeper probing in examining the impact of the telecentre on the broader multifaceted reality of the beneficiaries rather than a limited perspective that is often predictable. Such holistic analysis that interrogates what is important to the beneficiaries and how the utilization of the intervention links to their livelihood strategies, helps to adjust interventions to be more targeted in meeting specific needs, by drawing attention to the area of needs (Parkinson & Ramirez, 2007).

The SLA have some benefits that were relevant for this study. For instance, it allowed flexible design and application of any chosen frameworks to help understand and analyse the impact of development interventions. All applicable frameworks placed strong emphasis on the beneficiaries as actors who choose and act in accordance with the resources at their disposal and the context in which they operate. These decisions are based on perceived opportunities and risks (Parkinson & Ramirez, 2007). To this end, this study adopted the DFID Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) framework.

2.2.1 The Sustainable Livelihood framework

Figure 2.1 Sustainable livelihood framework



Source: DFID (2001)

Figure 2.1 is an image of the DFID sustainable livelihood framework.

The DFID framework interrogates peoples' livelihood systems. It assesses their vulnerability context (Twigg, 2001), and draws attention to individual's assets, showing how they interrelate and the possibility of individuals gaining access to a set of other assets (DFID, 2001). It also considers the social and cultural structures or processes, micro and macro factors, that may shape livelihoods or limit people's opportunities (Glopp, 2008). It allows for considering how an intervention affects the type of decisions people are making, considering the risks that they face and the assets they have (Morse & McNamara, 2013; Parkinson & Ramirez, 2007). Therefore, the SLA put impact assessment in a more comprehensive context.

The DFID sustainable livelihood framework depicts the key factors that influence people's livelihoods and their normal interactions. It shows how people behave in a vulnerable situation using their available assets (Glopp, 2008). The framework is useful in assessing how current initiatives contribute to livelihood sustainability (UNDP, 2017). The framework has five main

components, which are the vulnerability context, livelihood assets, transforming structures and processes, and livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes.

Vulnerability context in the framework refers to the shocks, seasonality or trends which affect livelihoods strategies and create insecurities in the wellbeing of individuals, households or communities (UNDP, 2017). Vulnerability measures the extent of peoples' exposure to risks. It emerges when people are faced with eventualities that they do not have the capacity to respond to effectively (Glopp, 2008). They are unpredictable occurrences that can weaken livelihoods and cause individuals to fall into poverty. According to Twigg (2001), the most prominent area of vulnerability is material poverty that includes land, finance, skills, labour, housing, infrastructure. These are most suffered by the poor because they do not have sufficient savings, but limited resources and few production options. In times of shocks, they are most vulnerable and if there are likely to recover, they do so more slowly.

The livelihood assets component refers to the resources or endowment people own which they can use to earn a living. The approach is based on the belief that people, especially the poor, need a variety of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes (DFID, 2001). These assets are human capital; representing skills, knowledge and abilities, social capital; which are formal or informal networks and social links, natural capital; refers to access to natural resources such as land, water, air, physical capital; referring to availability of infrastructure needed to support livelihood, and financial capital involving stocks or physical cash which individuals can use to acquire livelihood objectives (DFID, 2001).

Transforming structures and processes are the institution, organisations, and policies that influence livelihoods. They easily influence access to different types of capital, livelihood strategies or activities, exchange rates, as well as, returns to a given livelihood strategy (Glopp, 2008). Their actions and decisions have direct influence on whether people are able to achieve their well-being. They also influence the changes that people make about their livelihood activities.

The livelihood strategies are the combination of activities and choices that people undertake in other to achieve their livelihoods goals. They directly depend on the assets that individuals have, policies and institutions. The final element of the SLF is the livelihood outcome which are the results of the livelihood activities or strategies carried out. There are the goals that

individuals work towards, these could be well-being, increased income, reduced vulnerability, food security or sustainability of natural resources (DFID, 2001; Glopp, 2008).

The SLA possesses numerous strength that is useful in general, and for this study. Due to its participatory and responsive nature, it reveals the combined efforts, multiplicity of assets or the numerous economic activities people living in poverty are engaged in attempting in making a living (UNDP, 2017). This helps to understand what people living in poverty consider important to them, and in deciding strategic intervention that targets their real need rather than a pre-determined intervention that at best fulfils partial needs. Another strength of SLA is its ability to facilitate the understanding of the root causes of poverty by investigating the factors that inhibit or constrain access to resources, assets, or their livelihoods (Glopp, 2008; Krantz, 2001). These inhibitors could emanate from formal or informal institutional and social factors, economic policies, or legislative frameworks. This revelation can assist in determining ways to improve interventions. More importantly, and so for this study, SLA provided a more practical approach to evaluate the immediate and long-term impact of interventions on people's quality of life (UNDP. 2017).

Despite the above strength, SLA has some known challenges, noted by Krantz (2001). A major weakness of SLA is the difficulty in determining who constitute the poor, since poverty is beyond economic deprivation, but considered to be multidimensional. Hence, they may be the need to adopt selectivity criteria to identify who should be targeted, and this can promote exclusion. Krantz also noted that ensuring a flexible planning situation that will enable an open-ended analysis of the constraint of poor peoples' livelihoods, to determine areas of intervention, poses a challenge. This is because in most cases, antipoverty programmes are already identified and decided, thus, one can only hope that they fit into peoples' livelihood strategies (Krantz, 2001)

The SLA was considered for this study because of its focus on exploring the multidimensional nature of poverty as experienced by individuals, its interest in the availability of assets or resources and how interventions support these assets to sustainability to lift individuals out of poverty (UNDP, 2017). The SLA is useful in evaluating the performance of poverty reduction intervention because it provides the opportunity to show the multidimensional nature of poverty and how they relate, various constraints to exiting poverty experienced by individuals, and assessing the contribution that existing poverty intervention programmes have made to improving

quality of life sustainably (Serrat, 2017). The SLA was useful in extracting relevant data that was analysed to determine the impact of the N-Power programme on the livelihoods of its beneficiaries from an insider perspective. In addition, as emphasised by Morse and McNamara (2013), the SLA prioritises people in development programmes, interrogates the complexities of their internal and external lived environment and draws the links between their realities and interventions, giving insights on how they are applying interventions within their lived experiences.

An important position of the SLA relevant for this study is that poverty reduction is not achieved by improving economic growth even though it is necessary, but what is important is the capability of the poor to take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by economic growth (Krantz, 2001). Thus, it becomes necessary to unveil what prevents individuals living in poverty from taking full advantage of the available opportunities.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1 The Nature of poverty

Poverty has defied many interventions by countries and global communities due to its multifaceted nature. Many countries, especially developing countries, still grapple with poverty despite the ground-breaking achievements of the coordinated global campaign of the millennium development goals, which led to the elevation of one billion people of the population out of poverty between 2000 and 2015 (Millennium Development Goal Report (MDGR), 2015). The progress was uneven and made little impact on developing countries, who are at the receiving end of global economic and social inequalities. In 2014, over 1.2 billion people were estimated to be living in extreme poverty (Yeates, 2014). Most of whom are concentrated in five countries with an overwhelming number in Africa (Dauda, 2016; MDG Report, 2015). The advent of the sustainable development goals was to fix the mistake and improve on the MDG by ensuring that everyone is carried along, addressing the root cause of poverty, being more proactive to integrate the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development, and ensuring all countries work towards a more prosperous, sustainable, and equitable world (MDG Report, 2015).

Tackling the root cause of poverty is to recognise and identify the multifaceted nature of poverty (Kwon et al., 2017). Some dimensions of poverty require a short-term approach like the income support programmes, while other dimensions may require a more long-term and active

measures to provide relevant skills and opportunities. Hence, understanding the deep causes and identifying the dynamics of poverty can engender coherent policies that tackles poverty effectively (Kwon et al., 2017; Katz, 2015). This is where many countries find it most challenging, thus, grabble with failed antipoverty interventions.

A critical nature of poverty is that it is subjective and multidimensional (Praaga & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005; Lux & Andres, 2013). Therefore, it is impossible to have a universally agreed upon definition for poverty. Some definitions perceive poverty solely in the context of material or monetary deprivation, often measured in terms of income and consumption (Praaga & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005), or as the UK based Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) puts it, it is not having the resources to take care of one's basic needs (JRF, 2017). Hence, income or material resources are most essential for poverty, lack of which affect people emotionally and deprive them of the dignity of being active contributors in the society (JRF, 2017). This view of poverty advocates for sufficient income for individuals and households so they can meet their needs, live a quality life and be a responsible member of the society. It seems to be the basis for adopting measures like the "cash transfers" as an amelioratory measure for poverty reduction by most countries. The JRF also argues that poverty does not affect people equally, it is more prevalent in certain groups, and it is experienced differently depending on where individuals live, their neighbourhood and the access their neighbourhood provides to jobs and services like education, transport, and social care (JRF, 2017). Localising its definition therefore makes for an effective approach in dealing with poverty.

The World Development Report of 2001, however, presents a broader perspective of poverty that encompasses, in addition to material deprivation, "minimum achievements in education and health, presence of vulnerability and exposure to risk, and the lack of voice and feeling of powerlessness" (World Development Report, 2001, p.15). Such broad definition produces a deeper understanding of the multifaceted and reinforcing nature of poverty, and the range of policies that would be appropriate in tackling poverty at their various levels (World Development Report, 2001; World Bank, 2021) and mitigating its reinforcing nature for a sustainable poverty eradication.

While acknowledging the multiple dimensions of poverty and the need to make broader policies to address the different manifestations of poverty, at the heart of the problem of poverty,

some scholars seem to agree, is the lack of resources driven by unemployment and underemployment, and as emphasised by Katz (2015), the core root of poverty is the lack of money.

In the context of developing countries like Africa, most literature (Addae-Koranke, 2014; Shabir, et al., 2019; Iheonu & Urama, 2019; Okunmadewa, et al., 2005) attribute the causes of poverty in a broader sense to include corruption and poor governance, limited employment opportunities, poor infrastructure, poor resource usage, poor polices, unending conflicts and wars, structural and cultural factors. These result in the existence of different levels of poverty. Particularly, Olowa (2012) in a study that assessed the indicators and factors contributing to poverty in Nigeria, identified low economic growth, unemployment, low productivity and wages in the informal sector, economic degradation, inappropriate macroeconomic policies, crime and violence, workers' retrenchment, as major causes of poverty in Nigeria. These notwithstanding, Katz (2015) is of the view that poverty has a singular cause with different symptoms and its manifestation should not be mistaken for cause(s), thus, maintaining that lack of resources is the root cause of poverty. However, JRF (2017) concludes that the definition of poverty adopted by a government in a particular country will always determine what the root cause of poverty is. Nonetheless, the chronic underdevelopment and multiple deprivations in Africa can only lead to different dimensions of poverty reinforcing one another to complicate the poverty situation in most African countries.

2.3.2 Poverty in the context of Nigeria

Nigeria is made up of thirty- six states, six regions with seven-hundred and seventy-four local government and a Federal Capital Territory. It has a population of approximately 214 million with over 40 percent living in poverty (Abubakar, et al, 2022). The poverty situation in Nigeria is ironic considering the wealth inherent in the country. Nigeria is the biggest oil exporter in Africa with 37 billion barrels crude oil reserve, has the largest gas reserve of 192 trillion cubic feet, and highest population in the continent with 214 million people, majority of which are young people (Olotu et al., 2015; Oyewo, 2021). Nevertheless, Nigeria has consistently recorded high poverty rate since independence beginning at 60.78% in 1960, attaining its lowest at 44.70% in 1974 (Iheonu & Urama, 2019). Despite the monumental oil boom and economic growth of the 1980s, poverty peaked at 79.34% in 2000 and dipped a little to 64.34% in 2014 (Iheonu & Urama, 2019).

Irrespective of the huge resources committed to poverty alleviation programmes by successive governments, the country has failed to make significant progress in reducing its poverty rate (Okunmadewa, et al., 2005). Rather in 2018, Nigeria overtook India and became the world poverty capital, with the global highest record of 86.9 million citizens living in extreme poverty, and in 2019 had over 93 million of the population in monetary poverty (Iheonu & Urama, 2019).

Similarly, many Nigerians, 98 million, are also living in multidimensional poverty (World Bank Blog, 2021). These people are experiencing food insecurity, are unable to access education, health care and basic infrastructure like electricity, safe clean water, improved sanitation, security, and the necessities of life which guarantee human wellbeing (Iheonu & Urama, 2019). This situation worsened by the shocks of the COVID- 19 pandemic on the economy, which according to the World Bank Report (2022) may raise the poverty figure to a 100 million people by the end of 2022, except if Nigeria undergoes structural transformation in terms of its social and economic policies.

Various studies (Olotu et al., 2015; Iheonu & Urama, 2019; Olowa, 2012) hold that weak governance, structural challenges, corruption and antipoor policies, unemployment and underemployment, and the inability to diversify the nation's economy have contributed to worsening the poverty situation in Nigeria. Olowa (2012) maintained that poverty in Nigeria has multiple causes due to the complex factors that interacts, hence, emphasised that an economic growth which enables the generation of employment is most necessary to reduce poverty in Nigeria.

Currently, Nigeria is paying a heavy price for the high rate of poverty. Conflict, terrorism, kidnapping for ransom, and political instability are threatening to pull the nation apart. Thus, the World Bank in assessing the poverty situation of Nigeria advised that a deep, long-term structural reform that encourages and sustain pro poor growth, by targeting microeconomic policies is required. Nigeria should consider and target policies that boost the productivity of farm and non-farm enterprises, improve access to electricity, water, and sanitation, and strengthen information and communication technologies (World Bank, 2022).

2.3.3 Relationship between unemployment and poverty in Nigeria

A key part of poverty in Nigeria is unemployment which constitute a real barrier to social and economic progress in the country (Akinmulegun, 2014; Olotu et al., 2015). Unemployment is regarded as a condition of not having a paid job, where individuals desirous and able to work are not working (international Labour Organization (ILO), 2012; Hornby, 2010).

Despite Nigeria's enormous human and material resources that could generate employment in the country, the high rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria is questionable (Nwagwu, 2014). There are conflicting statistics on the exact unemployment rate in Nigeria due to social, cultural, and structural factors impeding the identification of those in hidden unemployment (Kayode et al., 2014), however, unemployment has always been reportedly high in Nigeria which causing and increasing the poverty situation of the country. The COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse effects on the economy presents another dimension to the unemployment crises around the world (David et al., 2020) including Nigeria. In 2020, the pandemic era, unemployment among economically active people (15 to 64 years) in Nigeria rose from 20.1% in 2018 to 28.6% in 2020, and among the young people (15 to 34 years) it was a high 34.9% in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2020). In 2022, the overall unemployment rate in the country sits at 33% (Statista, 2022). This situation according to Olotu et al. (2015) will only worsen as the country's population continues to grow, with many young people exiting the education sector into the labour force, waiting to be assimilated into the fragile economy.

Unemployment has grave implications for the youth, and for the social, political, and economic sustainability of the country. Surajo and Karim (2016) in their study of how unemployment threatens growth and development in Nigeria, conclude that unemployment disempowers the youth and make them susceptible to deviant behaviours, including engaging in crimes, ethnic militias, boko haram insurgency, political thuggery, thus upsetting the peace and security of the nation. Hence, they recommended among others, the prioritisation of youth empowerment through the establishment and revitalisation of skills acquisition centres and technical schools across the country, and infrastructural development to encourage job creation in the country.

Tackling unemployment at the root cause entails understanding the factors that promote it. As captured by Kayode et al. (2014), unemployment in Nigeria is driven by corruption or abuse

of office, which promotes ascription and nepotism in job placements and hostile implication on the economy. Poor management practice and poor implementation of economic policies, refusal to diversify the economy and the neglect of the agricultural sector all fuel unemployment in Nigeria. In addition, the situation is worsened by infrastructural decay, poor leadership and governance, unfavourable government reforms and unfavourable environment for businesses to thrive, high exchange rates, unaffordable interest rate, systemic problems in education affecting educational quality, inadequate job skill and training leading to the rejection of Nigerian graduates by the private sector, economic globalisation, digital revolution, and more recently, the adverse effect of global crisis, such as high inflation (Kayode, et. al., 2014; Nwagwu, 2014). It was recommended that government should regulate population growth in the country, promote entrepreneurship and encourage small business owners, as a strategy to address unemployment in the country (Olotu et al., 2015).

2.3.4 Poverty reduction scheme

Reducing poverty is a global agenda, and a huge challenge for countries. It is especially hard for countries facing conflicts and with weak institutions (Li et. al., 2021). The South Asia was the battlefield of poverty reduction until 2015, when Africa took over, with poverty population of over 433.9 million due to poor leadership and the incessant conflicts, political and social unrest that have left many displaced and hungry (Li et.al., 2021). A situation predicted to linger through 2050 except governments in the continent, especially the Sub-Saharan region, address conflicts, enhance economic growth and recommit to poverty reduction in earnest (Li et al., 2021).

China and India are singled out by the World Bank (2019) as countries that have successfully reduced poverty rates by providing leadership, building strong institutions, and implementing policies and programmes targeted at capacity building, economic inclusion, and growth. Recalling the experience of China, Li et al. (2021) noted that successful poverty reduction programmes in Africa, especially the Sub-Saharan region should drive economic growth and aim at sustainability, by building the resilience of the people. Thus, interventions should go beyond lifting people out of poverty to making sure that individuals remain resilient against external shocks to avoid returning to poverty (Li et al., 2021). This makes the case for sustainability in the antipoverty programme design.

To achieve resilience, Li et al. (2021) and the World Bank (2019) proposed that African countries should focus on promoting political stability, building strong institutions and economy, preventing risks and addressing conflict, and effectively managing natural disaster. They also advised targeting poverty alleviation scheme to ensure that the accurate and needed assistance or programme is delivered to the right population. The World Bank (2022) recommended regular assessment of the poverty reduction programme effects to determine what works or need to be adjusted to achieve programme aims. Other recommendations to build the resilience of people were that rural areas should be revitalized to discourage migration; improve agriculture to sustain livelihoods; invest in human capital, infrastructure; and support the growth of a strong private sector (Li et al., 2021).

Economic growth is being touted as the best route to poverty reduction due to its potential to generate employment, increase income and improve peoples' livelihoods (Ayoo, 2021). The Department for International Development (DFID) (nd) also asserted that it is the most powerful tool for poverty reduction and for improving the quality of peoples' lives in developing countries such as South America, Asia, and Africa, like Mozambique, Ghana, and Uganda. However, adequate, and deliberate measures must be taken to ensure it is inclusive, enabling all to participate in the economy, otherwise, economic growth will bring prosperity to a few and widen inequality in a country, as evident in most developing countries, including Nigeria (DFID, nd). Hence, the United Nations (2013) noted that poverty eradication cannot be achieved with economic growth alone, and macroeconomic recovery does not guarantee that social conditions would significantly improve. There is a need for support programmes to deliberately target people living in poverty.

Inclusive growth and sustainability have therefore become the hallmark of the Asian poverty reduction strategy and is a recommendation for developing countries. Developing countries are advised to promote inclusive growth in industries like technology that has potential for catch-up and leapfrogging other industries, and to consider policies that improve the informal sector (DFID, nd).

2.3.5 Nigeria Poverty Reduction Schemes

Successive governments in Nigeria have implemented several poverty reductions schemes over the years. Many studies (Dauda, 2016; International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2005; Taiwo & Agwu, 2016) have outlined these programmes beginning from 1960, after independence. The first

poverty alleviation policy was the Farm Settlement Option to develop the export and cash crops in the 1960s, which collapsed and gave birth to the National Accelerated Food Production Project in 1972 (Dauda, 2016). Then there was Agricultural Development Projects designed to make credit facilities available for agricultural projects, which later became moribund. In 1976 Operation Feed the Nation was introduced to promote food and cash crops cultivation for self-reliant, which was neither a success. Then came the Rural Banking Schemes to make credit facilities more accessible to the rural farmers (IMF, 2005). The military government of 1978 also introduced the Austerity Measure to restrict importation of goods and promote local production. This was not sustained either. Other programmes like the River Basin Development Authority were also introduced in 1986 to support local farmers, the Structural Adjustment Programmes, National Directorate of Employment, Directorate for Food, Road, and Infrastructure (DFRI), were all aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the people (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016). Subsequently, the Better Life Program to empower women in rural areas was introduced, so was the National Economic Recovery Funds, Peoples Bank of Nigeria, Family Support programmes, which aimed at healthcare delivery, child welfare and Youth development. (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016). In the 2000s, Nigeria embarked on the National Poverty Eradication Programme, consisting of youth employment schemes, rural infrastructural development and social welfare, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, Seven Point Agenda, and Nigeria Vision 20:2020 (Dauda, 2016; Taiwo & Agwu, 2016).

These programmes were focused on training and upskilling for income generation and improving accessibility to credit facilities, improving health care and general welfare for the people. However, according to Dauda (2016), these programmes were largely unsustainable and unsuccessful "for failure of continuation, political instability, policy inconsistency (and reversal), lack of political will and commitment, underfunding, corruption, and lack of involvement or failure to consult with the intended beneficiaries, among others" (p.7).

Strategies for poverty reduction should have vision for sustainability. Oyewo (2021) argues that sustainability is the ability of poverty alleviation programmes to address poverty in its multidimensional manifestations in health, education, and standard of living. Similarly, the World Bank Report of 1996 advised that strategies to combat poverty should promote laws that foster market incentives, social and political institutions that are dependable, good infrastructure, and

adaptable technology, as well as give those living in poverty access to fundamental social service (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016). Other measures to combat poverty include maintenance of price and stability of exchange rate. Similarly, the participation of grassroots to identify and implement projects that affect their lives, can help in reduce party. Likewise, Taiwo and Agwu (2021) advised that there should be transparency and accountability in project implementation, as well as improved monitoring and evaluation of programme performance to incorporate current challenges.

2.3.6 Social Investment Programme

Social investment became popular among the European states in the 2000s in response to the global economic crises that affected jobs and livelihoods across Europe (Nolan, 2013). It involves directing government social spending in areas that will boost human productivity and positively impact the economy (Nolan, 2013). In distinguishing social spending from social investment, Nolan (2013) clearly asserted that government's spending becomes a social investment when it boosts individual and economic productivity rather than just boosting consumption like family care and cash benefits.

In this sense, a social investment programme considers human beings as assets of the state and encourages investing in human capital development in achieving sustainable development in the state (Nolan, 2013). It is geared towards enhancing the productivity and wellbeing of the vulnerable or poor populations, by ensuring that these populations are empowered to participate in the economy and have access to basic social services (quality education, healthcare) that will guarantee a good quality of life (Nolan, 2013). In 2020, the European States deployed social investment programmes to lift 20 million people of the population in Europe out of poverty. The main focuses were on improving the employment rate and higher income (Cantillon, 2011). Although, in their analyses of the performance of the social investment programme in Europe, Cantillon (2011) noted that there was not much improvement in poverty reduction because even though there was an increase in employment growth it was mainly in the households that already have more employment than in households in actual need of employment. Cantillon (2011) therefore recommend focusing on protecting minimum income and ensuring a redistributive social programme that identifies and caters to the poor.

Bangladesh also deployed social investment approach for poverty reduction, which was aimed to develop effective and efficient institutions that are inclusive and responsive, to improve

access to local infrastructure and basic social services (education, infrastructures, clean water) for communities living in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2016). The World Bank assessment of the programme indicates poor performance of the programme due to weak institution, failure to define the category of poor people to be targeted, and lack of sustainability consideration (World Bank, 2016).

2.3.7 National Social Investment Programme (NSIP)

In the context of Nigeria, Oyekunle (2021) explained social investment programmes as those social plans or interventions implemented by governments and policymakers to achieve specific social objectives such as youth employment, healthcare provision, and economic empowerment. This portends that Nigeria has undertaken several social investment programmes in the past under different names, targeted at improving citizens living condition, youth unemployment, and inequality in the country. In 2015, the then government introduced the current NSIP to tackle vulnerability and poverty in its multiple dimensions in the country (Oyewo, 2021). The NSIP is categorised into two categories, namely, the social safety nets, and the social investments. The social investment comprises of four programmes in total, known as the NSIP suites.

The social safety nets embody the *Conditional Cash Transfer* that targets the poorest of the poor, providing them with regular stipends of five-thousand Naira monthly as financial support to enhance their livelihood (John-Akamelu et.al., 2022; National Social Safety-net Coordinating Office (NASSCO), nd). The social investment category includes the *Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme* to supports small enterprises, providing them with low interest loan; the *National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme* that targets primary school children, providing them with one meal a day to improve their nutritional intake, encourage children enrolment in schools, and promote community enterprises. And finally, the *N-Power youth empowerment programme* suite, designed to address youth unemployment and enhance inclusive participation in the economy through skills acquisition and capacity building initiatives, to improve their standard of living (Godwin, 2019). This suite targets youths with different levels of education namely, the graduates, and the non-graduates, and in different fields of interest or specialisation. The graduate level has various components like teaching (N-Power teachers), agriculture (N-Power Agro), health (N-Power Health), technology (N-Power Tech), and revenue generation (N-

Power Tax). Whilst the non-graduate level encourages vocational and entrepreneurial skills with specialisations in the creative field (N-Power Creative), technology (N-Power Tech hardware and N-Power Tech software), and in the building and construction field (N-Power Build) (Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021; Oyewo, 2021).

Although the NSIP is so versatile, ambitious, and complex, most studies including Lamidi and Igbokwe (2021) berate the capability of the Nigerian weak institutions to adequately implement the NSIP successfully. However, Lamidi and Igbokwe (2021) noted that the NSIP can contribute to socio-economic and infrastructural development and boost the private sector of the economy to achieve its full potential. But diversification of the economy is necessary to stimulate the economic and boost the potential of the NSIP to reduce unemployment and poverty (Lamidi & Igbokwe, 2021). In assessing the NSIP's potential to sustainably reduce poverty, Oyewo (2021) deployed the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (GMPI) using a three policy dimensions to measure the NSIP's contribution in addressing multidimensional poverty in health, education, and standard of living. He concluded that the NSIP schemes compliments each other and can ameliorate poverty sustainably, if implemented effectively. However, this submission was made by analysing the content and components of the NSIP. However, to determine the NSIP'S potential to reduce poverty and do so sustainably, the lived experiences of the beneficiaries needed to be interrogated. Oyewo (2021) also noted some challenges like poor accountability and transparency in implementation, political factors or interferences in beneficiaries' selection process and disbursement of funds, lack of funding, and proper coordination that could hinder the successful sustainable implementation of NSIP.

2.3.8 Empowerment Programme

Empowerment is a multifaceted social process that assists people in taking control of their lives. Various institutions have different interpretations of empowerment. Most international non-governmental organisations perceive it as both a process and an outcome. Abatan and Adesopo (2022) regard it as the participation of individuals in societal decisions, resources and development programmes. It is widely used to indicate an active process directed at reducing vulnerability and increasing the power, or capabilities, of individuals and groups to make decisions and translate them into actions and outcomes that benefit them (Albuquerque, et al., 2017). It is a means of restoring power or confidence to an individual or a group, often by sharing information, training

or building their capacities to make them self-reliant by controlling their own resources (Abatan & Adesopo, 2022). Thus, empowerment is anchored on the idea that with the right guidance, individuals can make their own decisions.

It is a popular objective for social development interventions of government and development agencies mostly to indicate positive change in an individual or a community (Abatan & Adesopo, 2022). If the aim of the change is to empower, Pephrah, et al. (2016) opine that it should focus on improving the capacities of its participants to expand their livelihood opportunities and sustain their livelihood outcomes. Empowerment programmes can be designed for different categories of individuals or communities, including women and youth, to achieve a particular change. Youth empowerment interventions are often designed to inspire active participation of the youth in their environment and in issues that affect their lives.

2.3.9 Relationship between Youth Empowerment and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

As a concept empowerment has broad interpretations. However, in relation to youth empowerment, it has been perceived as a transformational process of the youth gaining power and control over their lives, accomplishing efficient progress by navigating certain challenges (Martinez, 2016). It entails young people acquiring competencies, personal growth and wellbeing, and enhancing youth productive participation in social, political, and economic aspects of the society. Youth empowerment is designed to transfer valuable skills and education that will enhance productivity, enable job creation, increase earnings, and promote self-reliant, which makes it intrinsically relevant to poverty reduction (Martinez, 2016). In a study by Abatan and Adesopo (2022) that analysed youth empowerment projects and poverty reduction in Gambia, the consensus by beneficiaries and implementing partners were that youth empowerment programmes implemented in the country played a vital role in improving the standard of living for the youths in urban areas of the country, through employment generation and increase in monthly income. An online survey on *Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment integration and full employment and decent work for all* by the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, nd) also revealed that people who are empowered with a good education and the appropriate skills will be prepared to have a career and to hold a job that will make them more confident, give them the chance to learn from others, and allow them to earn a good living to help their children to live a better life

(UNDESA, nd). By implication, individuals empowered with skills become self-reliant and able to earn a living and take care of their family.

To make youth empowerment more effective, the UNDESA online survey suggests that to empower individuals they should be involved in the decision-making process and making inputs on the programme design and implementation (UNDESA, nd). This will ensure that programmes are relevant, address the needs of the beneficiaries, and are sustainable.

Poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria prioritise the youth because they are the demography with the highest population, and the most disadvantaged economically, yet youth are shouldered with enormous responsibilities of caring for the family. Empowering the youths therefore has extensive implication on improving household living condition. Youth empowerment in Nigeria remains challenged due to insufficient resources available for programmes, hence, participants are hardly supported with finance, tools, or starter packs (Adedoyin, et al., 2018). This corroborated the findings by Isiaka (2015) in a study of youth empowerment programme in Kwara state, Nigeria, that indicates shortage of loan, insufficient training, equipment, and the lack of access to finance, as major challenges inhibiting empowerment programmes in the state. The lack of funding, training and other resources have the propensity to negatively impact the quality and sustainability of empowerment programmes in the country.

2.3.10 The N-Power Empowerment Programme

Nigeria has a high unemployment rate among its productive youth, Statista (2022) recorded that 19.61 percent of the total number of young people in Nigeria, in 2021 are unemployed. Therefore, the inclusion of youth empowerment is non-negotiable and included in all poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, including the NSIP (Lamidi, 2021). As a component of the NSIP, the N-Power caters to all youth between the ages of 18 -35 regardless of educational background. The N-Power was designed to equip the graduate youths with the required skills and experience to enhance their employability. The N-Power design for the non-graduate and non-schooled youths, facilitates and promotes entrepreneurship and skills acquisitions, through vocational trainings to generate self-employment (Godwin, 2019).

The N-Power benefits from the NSIP's huge network of local and international partners, including the World Bank, DFID, Bank of Industry, relevant government institutions like the

Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development spearheaded by the Federal Ministry for Budget and National Planning, and other international non-profit organisations (NSIP, 2018).

It has the mandate to engender large-scale skills and knowledge development to boost economic growth and social development. This is with the intention to boost youth productivity and addressing unemployment and poverty among the largest demography in Nigeria. Thus, its key deliverables are to empower beneficiaries with requisite skills within one or two years as determined by the category; to provide graduates youths with work experience towards job employment, and to link policies towards improving public services (Godwin, 2019).

2.3.11 Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria and the N-Power implementation

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is the capital city of Nigeria, located at the central area of the country called Abuja. It is regarded as the eight most populous city in the country with six local governments known as area councils -Abuja Municipal Council, Gwagwalada, Bwari, Kuje, Abaji and, Kwali.

As with all states in the country, the FCT has its share of poverty. Statistics from the global data lab indicated that 65.3 percent of its population under 70 are living in poverty, and 14.7 percent are in the poorest households, majority of which are under 35 years of age (Global data lab (GDL), 2022). The Vanguard, a national daily, reported the alarming increase in poverty level, especially among women, in the city citing the lack of access to education, unequal access to land and healthcare as contributing factors (Vanguard, August 16, 2022). The poverty situation in the FCT as with most states is multidimensional with most of the population, especially women, experiencing acute hunger, poor housing condition, poor education, and other dimensions of poverty (Vanguard, August 16, 2022).

Although there are no comprehensive official figures, the FCT is perceived to be among the states currently reported to have benefitted the most from the N-Power programme (Tribune, July 16, 2022). Interested individuals were required to register through its online portal, afterward shortlisted to partake in various training for upskilling in both graduate and non-graduate schemes.

2.4 SUMMARY

This section discussed the theoretical framework within which the study was conducted. It introduced and elaborated on the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) as the framework for the study, highlighting relevant principles of the theory that are important to the study. The section also presented related literature that was reviewed. Poverty and its multidimensional nature were discussed. Nigeria's experience of poverty and efforts made over the years to curb it in Nigeria was mentioned. Antipoverty schemes implemented by various countries, particularly, the social investment programmes, were also discussed. The chapter also elaborated on the relationship between empowerment programmes and poverty reduction, and finally introduced and explained the N-Power empowerment programme designed to impact poverty in Nigeria. In Chapter three, the research methodology applied during the research study will be explained.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research methodology applied during the study. The research question, aims and objectives are presented. The research approach and design that were adopted by the study are explained. In addition, the population of the study, the sample and sampling procedure are described. The research instrument used and the methods of data collection, and data analysis are elaborated on. In addition, the trustworthiness of the research study and the study's adherence to ethical principles are discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The following research question guided the research study:

What are the perspectives of FCT beneficiaries on N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria?

The primary aim of the study was to explore the perspectives of beneficiaries in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria on the contribution of the N-Power component of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To explore the experiences of FCT beneficiaries on N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.
2. To determine the perceptions of N-Power FCT beneficiaries on factors impeding N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.
3. To explore the perceptions of N-Power FCT beneficiaries on what factors might improve N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.
4. To highlight examples where N-Power contributed to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The constructivist paradigm was applicable as qualitative research is rooted in constructivism. In this approach according to Byrne (2021), meaning is socially produced and reproduced bearing in mind the participants' socio-cultural context, background, and structural conditions that influence the experiences or information provided. For this study, meaning was generated from participants' understanding and interpretation of their experiences. This was important for the study because it helps to interrogate how beneficiaries make sense of their N-Power experience.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

Researchers often adopt quantitative or qualitative approaches, and more recently, a mix of both, depending on the field and aim of study (Bryman, 2006). Quantitative research has its root in physical sciences, it is concerned with statistical representation of data, uses numerical format to measure phenomena, and aims to generalise its findings (Gelo, et al., 2008). Qualitative approach, on the other hand, originates within the fields of psychology and social sciences in the 20th century, as a more preferred approach to the study of the human being and the society, because it provides a better understanding of the human being that is in-depth, holistic, and contextual (Gelo, et al., 2008; Pathak, et al., 2013; Bryan, 2006). It entails the direct and active involvement of a researcher in the collection and interpretation of data using open and flexible designs (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It is a human- centred approach to research that seeks to understand people's beliefs, experiences, and interactions, and allow them to make subjective meaning based on their personal experiences (Pathak, et al., 2013).

This study adopted the qualitative research approach since it was concerned with exploring the experiences and understanding the perceptions of the beneficiaries of the N-Power programmes and the influence of the programme on their livelihoods. In addition, this approach allowed for creating a deeper understanding of poverty and poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. The approach offered the flexibility needed for beneficiaries to express themselves more in-depth in responding to the interview guide questions, thus producing deeper meaning, showing patterns, and bringing up issues that has added new dimension and enriched the study (Pathak, et al., 2013). Therefore, it provided the opportunity to gather rich data and deep explanations before drawing up conclusions for the study.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

I employed the case study research design to interrogate in detail, how the N-Power programme impacted the beneficiaries in their effort to exit poverty on a sustainable basis. A case study design according to Creswell et al. (2007) is a qualitative design where the researcher investigates a single or several cases by gathering comprehensive data from various sources involving observation, interview, documents, and reports, then produce a case-based themes and case description. Crowe et al. (2011) describes it as the way we learn about a case or multiple cases and what we discover as a result. There are three types of case studies. The intrinsic case study, which is concerned with investigating the uniqueness of an object of study; the instrumental case study, which is about using a single case to gain broader understanding of an issue, and the collective or multiple case study which entails using multiple cases to gain wider understanding of issues (Crowe et al., 2011). For this study, the collective or multiple case study design was used to explore the problem statement and achieve the aim and objectives of the study. Individual participants were regarded as unique cases.

A case study is used to explain, describe, and explore events in everyday context in which they occur, and it helps to provide understanding and explanation of "causal links and pathways resulting from a new policy initiative or service development" (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 5). It is used to elicit response to enquiries that deals with a "how" "what" and "why" of an object or event of study (Crowe et al., 2011, p.5). This offered more insights into what gaps exist in the N-Power programme implementation, how programmes are impacting beneficiaries and why implementation might or might not be sustainably successful. The outcome helped to unravel the effectiveness of the N-Power program in sustainable poverty reduction.

Crowe et al. (2011) urges the researcher using a case study approach to clearly explain the steps taken in defining the case, selecting the case(s), collecting, and analysing the data, interpreting the data, and reporting the findings. He also warned of some pitfalls the researcher must be aware of such as, selecting wrong cases, collecting large volume of irrelevant data, ethical issues, lack of rigour and integration with theoretical framework. However, he added that the aforementioned can be mitigated by developing in-depth knowledge of theoretical and empirical literature and justifying choices, focusing data collection in-line with research questions, triangulation, respondent validation and transparency throughout the research process, anonymising and seeking participants' consent, allowing for unexpected issues without forcing

them, testing out preliminary explanations, and being clear about epistemological positions in advance (Crowe et al., 2011).

3.6 POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The population of the study were all the N-Power graduate and non-graduate beneficiaries since 2016. Ten participants were recruited; however, one withdrew from the study, and the other did not reply to my messages or calls on the scheduled dates of the interviews. Thus, the study sample comprised of eight participants; seven graduates and one non-graduate, who have spent a minimum of two years on the N-power programme; long enough to determine the influence of N-Power on their livelihood and poverty situation. This study chose a sample of 10 potential participants as Creswell et al. (2007) advised that a researcher should use a small sample size in a case study design to collect in-depth data. Similarly, the study was more interested in examining the experiences and perceptions of the N-Power beneficiaries rather than making generalisations. Hence a smaller sample was considered appropriate.

Participants of the study were members of the existing N-Power WhatsApp group, which is an informal group created by the beneficiaries of the N-Power programme in the FCT to motivate and support one another. Thus, those outside of FCT were excluded. Similarly, the study targeted participants between the ages of 18 and 35 years, which was also the official age group targeted by the N-Power programme. Only participants who had spent at least two years on the programme, acquired any of the N-Power skills, understood and could express themselves in English were selected. Though the sample was made up of male and female, however, it did not prioritise equal representation of gender because it was not an objective of the study.

In selecting participants, two broad categories of sample techniques are available to a researcher, the probability and non-probability sample techniques. However, the study utilised the non-probability sampling technique. The non-probability sampling technique according to Taherdoost (2016) is a more preferred technique for qualitative research and mostly used with case study design. In addition, it is appreciated for ensuring a clear rationale or criteria for the inclusion of certain individuals or subjects over others.

The study adopted the purposive sampling method to recruit potential participants. According to Polkinghorne (2005), purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of people and documents from which a researcher can significantly learn about an experience because they (people) can reflect on their experiences and articulate and express them. It is widely used in

qualitative research although it is criticised for enabling researcher bias, being subjective and unable to achieve generalisation (Sharma, 2017). However, purposive sampling is appreciated for its ability to ensure the selection of participants that are relevant to the objectives of a study (Taherdoost, 2016) and enable an enriched understanding of experience (Palinkas, et al., 2013; Seidman, 2006). Similarly, Polkinghorne (2005, p. 140), advised that for a study seeking a deep understanding of participant experience, sample selection should not be random or left to chance, but a researcher needs to purposefully seek out "fertile exemplars" that will produce data that are sufficiently rich and can give refinement and clarity to the understanding of an experience. Since this study did not aim to generalise its findings but to understand subjective interpretation by its participants, the purposive method of sampling was the most ideal.

In terms of managing researcher bias, Polkinghorne (2005) is of the opinion that a clear documentation of the recruitment process or selection strategies with a detailed description of how and why the sources or participants were selected will boost the validity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

With regards to the above, a participant pool was developed with a list of willing participants recruited from the available WhatsApp groups for N-Power beneficiaries in the FCT. Having sought the permission of the WhatsApp group administrators to reach out to beneficiaries and enlist willing participants, I was added to the WhatsApp group to recruit and publish the participant's invitation form on the WhatsApp page, for direct contact by willing participants. The form contained all the necessary information about the study, the requirements for participation, and my contact information. The potential participants were encouraged to contact me personally via a telephone call or private message. A potential participant list was developed, and a personal call was made to each participant to obtain participants description and information about their experience (positive and negative) of the N-Power programme. Based on the deviant sampling selection, the selected participants were further contacted to make an appointment for the research interview.

3.7 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A semi-structured interview guide was applied as the research instrument during the study. Greeff (2005) observed that an interview guide is designed beforehand because it forces the researcher to think deeply and anticipate what would be covered in an interview; from the overall issues to the themes, and to present them in the most logical order, from simple to complex. It

contains predetermined questions that may be used by a researcher to engage the participant and guide the narrative. The interview guide facilitates a semi-structured interview to give participants the flexibility to answer in their own words, while also enabling a deeper probing of emerging concepts and ideas. Greeff (2005) further added that an interview guide contains the main questions, probing questions, and the follow-up questions. she advised that having a set of questions that specify the areas to be explored will allow participants to provide further explanations. Hence, for this study, the research question was captured as the main question, and other supportive and probing questions that could generate more meaning and lead to the achievement of the study aim and objectives was added. The researcher used the semi-structured interview guide to interact with the participants and guide the conversation to allow participants to share their experiences and perceptions and they could express themselves in their own way.

3.8 PRE-TESTING THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The semi-structured interview guide was pretested with one participant instead of two, selected from the participant list and interview was conducted online. It was a presidential election week in Nigeria and citizens were expected to cast their votes from their states of registration. The second participant travelled out of the FCT to cast his vote in another state and could not be reached on the phone for the interview. The pre-testing of the research instrument was done to establish whether the questions were clear and not ambiguous and could yield information in line with the aim and objectives of the study. Gill et al. (2008) advised that interview guides should be pretested with some participants before data collection to determine the effectiveness of the tool in answering the research questions. Greeff (2005) also noted that pretesting has the benefit of making a researcher aware of the practicality of conducting an interview, level of interview skills and establishing access to participants. In view of this, I pre-tested the semi-structured interview guide and specific attention was paid to language clarity, questions flowing logically, and flexibility for participants to raise their own points. This participant was not part of the research participants, and data collected during the pre-testing was not included in the data analysis of this study.

3.9 RESEARCH METHODS

3.9.1 Method of Data Collection

This study utilised one-on-one interview, conducted face to face, as the major method for collecting primary data. Interview is a widely used approach for collecting data in qualitative design because it enables the researcher gain deeper and detailed insight directly from a participant about an experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). It is a viable tool when the intention is to explore the opinions and experiences of individual participants, as with this study aim.

Since this study was interested in exploring deeper experiences and perspectives of beneficiaries' experience of N-Power programmes, the one -on one interview method was most appropriate. The interview with participants was conducted face to face, at participants' preferred locations within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria. Gill et al. (2008) emphasised the need to hold interviews in a location most suitable for participants, stating that it makes them more comfortable to interact freely and provide more productive information. Thus, the exact location was decided with each participant. Adequate care was taken to ensure that interviews were conducted in safe locations. There was no threat of terrorist attack within the FCT for the entire period of the interviews. Participants were advised to stay alert by watching the news for any possible indication, but FCT was calm and safe throughout the interview period.

Interview with each participant lasted between twenty-nine minutes and one hour and was audio recorded and transcribed. Participants each received a participant information sheet (see Appendix A) and a consent form (see Appendix B), which they signed acknowledging their voluntary participation before the interview was conducted. Before their interview, participants were each told to indicate at any point if they experience any discomfort arising from the questions or responses during the interview that may trigger a relapse of a past traumatic experience. They were made aware of the availability of a counsellor, which they can contact, free of charge, during and post interview. During the interview, field notes were made to highlight important points or relevant observations.

3.9.2 Methods of Data Analysis

In analysing data collected in a qualitative research, different types of analysis can be employed. This study employed the thematic analysis approach to make sense of the data collected from the subjective experience of the participants.

Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to thematic analysis as a method of analysis used by a researcher to find, analyse and report themes or patterns within a given data, which requires searching across a data set (interviews, a range of texts) to identify reoccurring patterns of meaning. It is widely used among qualitative researchers due to its flexibility in approach and design, as well as the opportunity to produce rich and meaningful data while thinking through and linking data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

There are different types of thematic analysis such as code reliability, codebook, and reflexivity. While the first two make use of predetermined codes and themes to engage data set, the reflexive format does not use codebook but allows a researcher to add and drop codes as they move recursively through the data set, the researcher actively and subjectively engages the data set, coding and identifying themes that accurately reflects the content of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each of these type of thematic analysis employs different strategies that support the process of identifying themes. These strategies as indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006) are: the inductive, which is data-driven, hence a researcher identifies codes and themes while engaging the data without attempting to fit it to a predetermined code framework. Conversely, the deductive strategy is driven by the researcher's interest, hence the researcher engages the data with pre-set themes they expect to find in the data. Then the semantic and latent strategies. They added that these strategies can be combined in a study as it best supports the chosen type of the thematic analysis.

To build integrity for the analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) also recommend that a study should clearly state the theoretical assumptions or the conceptual framework or design and the decisions made by the researcher on the type of thematic analysis they wish to employ, the strategies for identifying themes, stating clearly if themes will be identified at semantic (explicitly stated or written themes) or latent level (underlying themes or meanings), how the data will be understood, whether from an experiential or critical viewpoint, and the research epistemology that guides how meanings will be theorised.

To this end, this study adopted the reflexive type of thematic analysis because of its ability to capture rich interpretation, thoughtful and subjective meaning from the data set made up of the lived experiences of participants. Similarly, the study predominantly utilised the inductive approach to identify themes. This is because the purpose of the study was to give voice to the experiences of the beneficiaries before the researcher would provide subjective interpretation to the participants' views. Hence, themes generated were data-driven. As noted by Braun and Clarke

(2006) and Byrne (2021), it is not possible to exclusively stick to inductive or deductive analysis in practice, but a study can be predominantly one of either. Therefore, a degree of deductive analysis was also used in the study. It was useful when determining the criteria for the identification of code to ensure that the data-based meaning being generated was contributing to the research question.

In coding, this study employed both semantic and latent approaches. As indicated by Byrne (2021), in semantic coding the researcher examines the surface meaning of data, by describing the data without going beyond what is said, while latent probes the data for hidden means or underlying ideas, assumptions or ideologies that may give more meaning to the descriptive data. Going by this description, both approaches were useful to the study because the semantic approach considered meanings constructed by participants and the latent enabled the researcher to engage more critically and give more interpretation to the data.

In generating themes and meanings, this study adopted the experiential viewpoint in understanding the data. This is because its focus was to reflect the experiences and opinions of the participants; to gain the subjective interpretation of participants' experience of N-Power and poverty reduction. The experiential orientation according to Byrne (2021) acknowledges that individual's thoughts, feelings, and experiences are a product of their deep psychological state, therefore language is used to reflect these thoughts, unlike the critical orientation that holds that language creates rather than reflects. Hence, I considered how the respondents understood and interpreted issues and concepts based on their personal experiences through the language that they used.

This research was guided by the constructionist epistemology. With constructionist epistemology meaning is socially produced and reproduced, thus, the socio-cultural context, background and the structural conditions of the participants influence the experiences or information being provided (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By actively engaging the data, I explored implicit meaning to produce deeper interpretations from the data set. Likewise, themes or patterns that were both meaningful and important in answering the research questions were best considered, rather than those that were simply reoccurring. This was in line with Byrne (2021) view that in constructionist epistemology, the reoccurrence of a perceived important information should not be the only criteria in the development and interpretation of codes and themes, but the meaningfulness

is very important, for what is common may not necessarily be important in answering research question.

The thematic analysis approach has some challenges which were noted. A major pitfall of the approach is its flexibility and lack of a definite method of applying it. This Braun and Clarke (2021) alluded to, indicating that thematic analysis is not tied to a specific theoretical framework but has the flexibility to be used within several theoretical frameworks. Hence, it is deemed susceptible to poor practice. Therefore, a researcher has the challenge to demonstrate integrity of the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Other challenges of the approach are; failure to actively analyse the data, the use of interview schedules as themes, weak or unconvincing analysis, mismatch between data analysis and claims and between theory and analytical claims, all of which a research can avoid by engaging actively with the data and producing rich description and interpretation with accurate examples, considering obvious alternative readings, variations and contradictions, and ensuring interpretation is consistent with the theoretical framework of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The analysis was structured along the six- phase process for conducting reflexive thematic analysis as amplified by Braun and Clarke, involving the process of familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, generating themes, reviewing potential themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2021).

An important consideration in thematic analysis is in dealing with the concept of data saturation. Often regarded as a point of information redundancy or data sufficiency. It is when a researcher is satisfied that further meaning, code, or theme cannot emanate from additional data, hence put a stop to data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Although it is viewed to rationalise sample size, there are contentions over its usefulness to other forms of thematic analysis such as the reflexive analysis. Sampling various authors' positions on this, Braun, and Clarke (2019) noted that data saturation may not be an important consideration, in fact, may even be awkward for reflexive analysis because reflexive type of thematic analysis focuses on "open, fluid, organic and recursive coding practice" (p.7) that shows researcher's deep engagement with the data and constantly generating new meanings as they engage with additional or new set of data. However, they noted that other types of thematic analysis like codebooks and coding reliability may find data saturation a useful concept to justify a sample size, because those types of thematic analysis use predetermined codes with fix meanings. Hence, when the meanings realised for a set of data

is deemed sufficient to explain the code or theme, the researcher stops data collection. Braun and Clarke (2019) are quick to add however, that data saturation is not a methodological practice in qualitative research but a rhetorical device, hence a researcher can choose to apply or ignore it.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Throughout the course of this study, I ensured that data collected are from credible sources and is dependable. Trustworthiness in qualitative research have been narrowed down to demonstrating credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in the research process and report (Shenton, 2004). Several authors (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000) have contested the practicality of achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research. Silverman (2021) argued that a major challenge of the qualitative approach is in ensuring credibility as researchers tend to mainly capture views that support their position. Credibility in research as opined by Shenton (2004) is when the findings of a study agree with the reality that is being tested. In other word, the ability to convince a reader that your findings are an accurate record of the phenomenon under investigation, or that the findings reflect the actual meaning of the opinions of the participants.

3.10.1 Credibility

To achieve credibility, Shenton (2004) outlined several ways a researcher can demonstrate it, such as to clearly explain the research methods used in gathering and analysing data, adopt random sampling, carry out consultation or familiarity visits, adopt triangulation, and promote honesty by ensuring voluntary participation. In relation to this, this study adopted triangulation by combining relevant data from different sources such as various reports available online from the official government websites and World Bank, as well as online articles and opinion on the implementation of the N-Power programme to provide different perspectives to the research problem and possible background that may provide explanation for possible attitudes and behaviours of participants. Similarly, detailed description of the process of data collection and analysis was made, and rival explanations, contrary or disagreeing views, surprises and outliers were captured to boost credibility of the data.

3.10.2 Transferability

Another way of determining trustworthiness is by proving transferability of the findings. This is the ability to prove to the readers that the research findings can be applied to different

settings, population, or location. This is achieved by providing a thick description of the participants so that the readers can compare with other research findings or with their own experiences (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). To this end, I provided a thick description of the sample, their profile and background and the bias they held. And if there was any threat on why the results or findings could not be transferred this was stated in the description of the sample cases. A detailed report of my experience during the data collection process including the social and cultural context, like where the interview occurred, how the interview was done, the condition and time of interview, the duration and other information that would ensure a good understanding of the research settings was documented to assist readers make their judgement on transferability.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability addresses the issue of consistency of findings when the study is repeated in the same setting using the same method. According to Shenton (2004) this is achieved when the process within the studies or the implementation of the research design is reported in detail, in a way that another researcher can repeat the process and perhaps achieve similar result. They added that a researcher can also document the details of the data gathering process and the reflection on the evaluation of the project, assessing the success of the investigation process used. In line with this, I provided a detailed account of the data collection process and the steps taken for analyses, including how decisions were made and conclusion drawn.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Demonstrating trustworthiness also requires a researcher to prove that the findings are a product of the participants' experiences and ideas and free of the researcher's manipulations and biases (Shenton, 2004). It is the extent to which a reader can agree that the research findings are not the ideas of the researcher but a derivation from data, which can be demonstrated through audit trail or by ensuring that all through study, records of the research process are kept (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Through thick and rich description of the methodological process, triangulation, reflection and admission of my assumptions, this study was able to demonstrate confirmability.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.11.1 Ethical Approval

I applied and received ethics clearance from the Departmental Ethics Committee (non-medical) at the University of Witwatersrand with the protocol number SW23/01/05. Research

ethics are important considerations for all fields of study. The need to respect human rights, protect the human wellbeing and the society has gained priority over the benefits or any value a study may have for the society. Several authors including Seidman (2006), Anabo, et al., 2018). and Madushani (2016) have stressed the need for a social researcher engaging human beings in a study to get ethical clearance and pay adequate attention to vulnerability issues especially when using in-depth interviews to collect data. They emphasised that the researcher must demonstrate commitment to ethical values of promoting respect for people, maximising benefit, and minimising harm, ensuring no harm is done and treating all subjects of the study equally.

3.11.2 Permission from WhatsApp group administrator

I also sought for permission from the administrator of the WhatsApp group for the beneficiaries of N-Power programme in the FCT, in Nigeria, to gain access to the potential participants who are members of the group (see Appendix E).

3.11.3 Voluntary Participation

Voluntary participation portends respect for persons, which is advocated by the Belmont report of 1978 (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Subjects, 1978). Respect for persons according to the Belmont report is to acknowledge the participant as an autonomous human being, capable of making decisions, as well as, ensuring that individuals participate voluntarily, without coercion or cajoling, and are free to withdraw consent from the study. This information was presented in the participant information sheet (see Appendix A) and made known to the participants at the point of recruiting potential participants and obtaining an informed consent from the participants. They were informed that they will be no reward or penalty for participating in the study and told that they are free to pull out of the interview at any point without repercussion.

3.11.4 Informed Consent

A researcher is expected to obtain informed consent by providing full disclosure or sufficient information about the research and its purpose, methods, and potential risks if they are any, and benefits, for participants to make informed judgement (Anabo, et al., 2018; Seidman, 2006). To this end, a consent form detailing what participants will be consenting to was also issued (see Appendix B). Anabo et al. (2018) further stated that it is the responsibility of the researcher

to ensure that their participants understand the content of the consent form. Hence, verbal explanation was provided where participants required further explanations.

3.11.5 Doing no harm

The Belmont report advocates for the need to minimise harm and maximise benefit. Harm could be physical, legal, social, economic, and psychological, and can be minimised through providing therapy, confidentiality, and privacy (Anabo et al., 2018). Where risk is unavoidable the researcher is expected to inform the participants and make provisions for protection. This study anticipated the possible risk of intimidation and victimization of participants by government officials implementing the N-Power project. Participants were made aware of this and allowed to make their decisions about participating. However, they were guaranteed confidentiality for their participation and anonymised in the report to protect their identity. Similarly, there is the risk of participants relieving traumatic experiences while responding to interview questions. Thus, participants were made aware of the possibility of a relapse and the free professional support and contact that is available, during and post interview.

3.11.6 Confidentiality

Participants were assured that information shared during the interview would not be shared with a third party nor made public in a way that it can be linked to them. Confidentiality could be guaranteed because the method of data collection used was one-on-one interview, thus, only the research could have access to participants' information.

3.11.7 Anonymity

Although participants real identities were not revealed in the report as codes were used to replace their names, anonymity could not be ensured as participants were interviewed face to face. Nonetheless, anonymity of data in the research report was guaranteed because no identifying particulars were revealed in the report.

3.11.8 Data Protection and Management

Interviews were recorded using an audio device, transcribed, and stored in a password protected device, private and belonging to the researcher. The data was saved in a file and a duplicate was uploaded to my google drive for safety.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter described the research methodology used by the study. It explicated the research question, aims and objectives, as well as research approach and design, the population, sample, and sampling techniques employed. It also explained the research instrument, methods of data collection and analysis. The trustworthiness of the study was explained and the ethical principles that were observed were highlighted. In Chapter four, the presentation and discussion of the collected data will be addressed.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the collected data. Demographic data were analysed, and reflexive thematic analysis was employed to identify, record, and analyse emanating themes and subthemes from the qualitative data. Findings of the study are discussed in line with the theoretical framework and literature.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 4.1 Demographic profile of participants (N=8)

Demographic factors	Sub-categories	No.	N-Power sub- categories		
			N-Power Teach	N-Power Agro	N-Power build
Gender	Male	5	3	1	1
	Female	3	1	2	0
N-Power category	Graduates	7	4	3	0
	Non-graduates	1	0	0	1

Table 4.1 shows the demographic profile of the participants. Eight study participants were interviewed by the researcher. Of the eight participants, five were male and three were female. Seven participants were enlisted from the graduate category of the N-Power, and one was from the non-graduate category. Of the eight participants four are from the N-Power teach, of which three were male and one was a female; Three represented N-Power Agro, of which one was a male and two were female. Finally, one male participant was enlisted from the N-Power Build

In the next section, the themes and sub-themes that emanated from the analysed data will be presented.

4.3 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES THAT EMANATED FROM THE STUDY

The collected data were analysed, and four recurring themes and 12 sub-themes were identified.

In Table 4.2, the themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysed data are presented.

Table 4.2 Themes and Sub-themes that emanated from the study

Themes	Sub-themes
4.3.1. Beneficiaries' general experiences of N-Power programme	4.3.1.1. Insufficient financial resources 4.3.1.2. Hope versus Despair 4.3.1.3. Empty promises
4.3.2 N-Power's contributions to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.	4.3.2.1. N-Power encouraged career progression 4.3.2.2. N-Power boosted my sources of income
4.3.3. Factors impeding N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.	4.3.3.1. The lack of support to encourage sustainability of project 4.3.3.2. Lack of leadership and poor management of N-Power 4.3.3.3. Superficial training 4.3.3.4. Inadequate stipends 4.3.3.5. Continuous transitions of government affect the sustainability of the programme 4.3.3.6. Operational irregularities and corruption
4.3.4. Improving factors to position N-Power for poverty alleviation	4.3.4.1. Explore collaborative partnership with other sector

4.3.1. Theme 1: Beneficiaries general experience of N-Power programme

Most of the participants expressed mixed reactions while reflecting on their experiences on the N-Power programme. Some were disappointed that they wasted time on the programme which they could have used to improve their lives. They used expressions like "very bad experience" (P6), and "very sad" (P3) to capture their experiences. A participant who maintained that his four years on the N-Power was a waste of productive time and age remarked:

> *"The truth is that they should be some form of empowerment about the programme." (P3)*

Another participant summarised his experienced thus:

> *"Imagine as a beneficiary you wake up every morning to go to your place of assignment and you're using money to transport yourself to and fro (sic) and you also have to feed yourself. The first month nothing comes in, second month ends nothing comes in, so how do you survive?" (P6)*

A participant (P2) from N-Power build further remarked that he was unable to build his capacity substantially enough to improve his opportunities.

> *"We learnt how to do some minor repairs of automobile, like fixing of tyre and changing plugs. Afterward we didn't have a very intensive training… Automobile is not something you just wake up to and start just after 3 months. You cannot do anything." (P2)*

These responses revealed that participants had expected that the programme would expand their earnings and ability to increase their resources. They had hoped for a transformational change or efficient progress in their lives because of their participation in the N-Power programme. These expectations are in line with what Martinez (2016) opined about empowerment programme that it should involve acquiring competences, personal growth and enhance youth productive participation in economic aspect of the society.

Other sub-themes emerging from the experiences of participants include the following

4.3.1.1. Insufficient financial resources

Seven out of the eight participants lamented over the poor stipend of 30 thousand Naira (65.20 USD), which beneficiaries received at the end of each month. They regarded this amount to be insufficient in catering to the basic needs of the beneficiaries. A participant succinctly puts it:

> *"Everybody complained that the money wasn't enough. Like one of our colleagues then, Tony, he always says that 'the take home never took him home'. Many of us were always like -if you're depending solely on N-Power like financially, you will always be broke." (P3)*

Another view, which is also popular among 7 other participants, is that which was commented by *P5*. She stated that:

> "*…the stipend we were given was not enough to really fend for our daily needs much less save out of it and then begin a business. So, with that challenge, it made it hard for the beneficiaries or me to earn and save*".

These responses emphasised the need for social investment programmes to aim beyond satisfying the basic needs of its beneficiaries, but rather boost their income and enable them to invest or engage in economic activities. As stated by Nolan (2013) government spending becomes social investment only when it boosts individual and economic growth among the population it seeks to lift out of poverty. This seems to be the points these participants were making about the stipend falling short of their ability to cater for their basic needs and engage in any meaningful venture.

4.3.1.2. Hope versus Despair

All eight participants lamented a lack of support after the N-Power programme. Seven participants stated their disapproval maintaining that N-Power caused emotional, physical, and psychological damage to its beneficiaries for lifting them out of unemployment and sending them back to unemployment, thereby leaving them worse than it met them. A participant remarked vividly:

"*it's just like you want to take someone across the river then you take the person down to the middle of the river and allow him or her to drown." (P5)*

Two other participants shared similar feeling of hopelessness:

"…*we all had hope. We even got forms to fill that was asking whether we wanted to be absorbed into the system or empowered after the programme. We filled the form and had hope that something could come out, but to your tent oh Israel." (P3)*

And

"No job, no skills to fall back on, nothing. Even getting teaching jobs wasn't easy". (P1)

These responses suggest that beneficiaries had expected that the N-Power programme would not be a momentary, quick-fix, one-time intervention but a long-term, transformative engagement, which will impact relevant skills and expand their opportunities to keep them perpetually out of poverty. This expectation aligns with the observation by Kwon et al. (2017) who noted that some dimension of poverty requires a more long-term and active measures to provide relevant skills and opportunities for the target group.

4.3.1.3. Empty promises

Participants expressed frustrations over the failed promises by the N-Power programme to adequately train and give every beneficiary an "exit package" after their exit from the programme. According to them, this delayed their progress and hampered their abilities to take advantage of opportunities, living them stranded. This participant mentioned that:

"If they had given use intensive training beyond the 3 months, like sent us a proper workshop or company for an intensive train, we could have been able to stand on our own." (P2)

Another participant spoke of his dashed hope. He said:

if the government had given adequate exit package it would have helped… I would have opened my business and if not for anything, if I wanted to do it part-time, I

would have started a storage facility where I could store enough of grains, cereals and nuts, for sale." (P5)

The inability of these participants to gain adequate skills or improve their earning potential, undermines the ability of N-Power programme to promote self-sufficiency among its beneficiaries. Adams (2003) noted that the main point of empowerment is to support individuals to take charge of their situation and achieve their own goals. The idea is to facilitate self-sufficiency and not a further dependence on government for sustenance. This act of dependence can be wildly attributed to the seemingly lack of intensive training missing in the experiences of the N-Power beneficiaries and the poor stipend, which could not meet the daily needs of the beneficiaries or enable them save.

4.3.2 Theme 2: N-Power's contributions to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Majority of the participants struggled to identify how impactful N-Power had contributed to improving their livelihoods. Some would shake their heads to indicate their disagreement with the thought that N-Power affected their lives positively. Some of them considers monetary and job benefits as the only impact N-Power could have on their livelihoods.

A participant noted:

"If they had given us money to go and start poultry or fish farming, then we can say ok we now have money. But what is the point of you employing somebody and after 2 years, nothing, he becomes worse than when he started the programme." (P3)

Another participant commented that:

"The programme was mainly designed for the unemployed graduates to engage in and earn a stipend." (P6)

This indicates a narrowed view of empowerment programmes by these participants, which can distract participants from taking advantage of opportunities that could enhance other forms of assets and build their resilience against risk and poverty. In promoting sustainable livelihoods, DFID (2001) observed that economically disadvantaged people or people living in poverty require

more than one asset to build resilience against vulnerability. Other assets in terms of human capital or skills and social capital; formal or informal networks are possible assets that can be combined to meet livelihood objectives.

Some participants, however, were able to identify other kinds of benefits and opportunities they considered important, for which N-Power enabled them to achieve. These are presented in the following sub-themes:

4.3.2.1. N-Power encouraged career progression

Three participants alluded to the contribution of N-Power to the advancement of their careers, reiterating that certain skills, experiences, and networks they got from N-Power propelled them further in life. One participant indicated he was able to earn a master's degree because of the financial contribution from N-Power, he was also able to identify his passion for teaching:

> "*My experience with N-Power encouraged me more in wanting to go into the educational sector and it pushed me to even further my education, because after my MSC I still went ahead to start my PhD." (P4)*

Another participant spoke of N-Power's contribution to her current job:

> *"It was through N-Power I got my present job. I remember I went to supply milk at a school where my mom's colleague was teaching, from there she asked me to bring my CV. In my CV I added I was an N-Power staff; it made me have an edge over others during employment because I had something very useful doing." (P7)*

Similarly, a participant under the N-Power Teach lauded N-Power for impacting a critical skill that was crucial to the success of her current position as an administrative staff:

> *"…socially you'll find out that I have changed I can actually address people, not minding their age range."* (*P1*)

This theme, especially in the experiences of P1 and *P7* attested to N-Power's capability to broaden these participants livelihood options and increase their opportunities and livelihood strategies, which have implications for improved livelihood outcomes for them. This theme also agrees with the sustainable livelihoods framework assumption that individuals make their decisions about their livelihood strategies based on the resources at their disposal and the

environment in which they live (Parkinson & Ramirez, 2007). In addition, the experiences of these participants advanced the submission by Li et al. (2021) that empowerment program designed to alleviate poverty should, not only encourage economic growth and inclusion but also build the capacity of its participants to ensure self-reliance, promote resilience and avoid returning into poverty.

4.3.2.2. N-Power boosted my sources of income

Three participants reported that the financial benefit from N-Power assisted then to invest in agricultural businesses, thereby improving their earnings. One of them commented:

> *"... the first salary that I received I was able to start a poultry farm on my own. I was able to get some birds, and by Easter, I sold and got good amount of money."* (*P7*)

These two participants reported diversifying their income because of the opportunities provided by N-Power:

> *"...the catering and event management course I took then has boosted my source of income because I used those side hustles to make money though not on a regular basis but then something is coming small, small (sic) from that side."* (*P5*)

And

> *"I used it for my wife's business. I used the money to pay the rent for one year, to buy fridge and opened a provision store for my wife."* (*P8*)

Participants made certain changes in their livelihood strategies due to the influence of N-Power. These changes are in the diversification of their income. Participants observed that N-Power paid a "very Poor Stipend" that was unable to meet their daily needs or enable them to save. Because of the exposure that some participants had because of being shortlisted to work under the N-Power Agro, their experiences working with farmers inspired them to venture into agricultural businesses to complement their earnings, thereby diversifying their income. Some of these participants started a poultry farm, and some started trading in agricultural farm produce. This amplified the point by Parkinson and Ramirez (2007) that beneficiaries of social development programmes make decisions about their livelihood strategies based on opportunities and risks.

Thus, social development programmes should aim to expand opportunities for their beneficiaries. As echoed by Peprah et al. (2017), empowerment programme should focus on improving the capacity of its beneficiaries to expand their opportunities or diversify their income to attend to their livelihood in a sustainable manner. Since empowerment programmes are not expected to last a long period of time, it should have the ability to promote self-sufficiency for its beneficiaries, to avoid falling back into poverty.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Factors impeding N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Seven participants believed that N-Power failed to achieve its purpose, this is mainly because after they were exited, there was no "exit package" to support their take off, neither were they retained as a permanent staff of the institutions where they served. Most of them could not secure employment, those who got employed reported being underemployed. Thus, a participant remarked:

"I am disappointed in N-Power for failing to live up to its promise." (*P6*)

Only one participant rated the programme as successful, stating that she never had a high expectation for the programme as she only needed something that could take her out of the house every day. However, she believed that the government should have fulfilled its promise to exit beneficiaries with the option of either a permanent job or grant for beneficiaries aiming to venture in businesses.

These responses highlight a lack of sustainability associated with the N-Power programme. This theme echoes the findings by Dauda (2016) previous empowerment programmes had the challenge of ensuring sustainability due to several challenges, such as lack of resources, continuity, corruption, and other factors that were left unaddressed.

Some of the emerging sub themes include:

4.3.3.1. The lack of support to encourage sustainability of project

All eight participants lamented the lack of exit package for beneficiaries. They claimed that the lack of exit package made their situations worse than it was before N-Power. They also remarked that only those who had other sources of income could sustain their livelihoods after N-

Power abruptly ended. The abrupt ending according to them disrupted life for them as many were unable to save from the monthly stipend to fall back on, in times of such shock. They seem to suggest that due to the lack of exit package they have remained vulnerable. This participant suggested that N-Power does not support sustainability because it impacts negatively on the ability of its beneficiaries to earn an uninterrupted livelihood in the future. He said:

> *"Most of those people gave in their time and energy and they gave it their all. Instead of doing something else to further the course of their own personal lives, they gave it to N-Power programme, only to be exited without proper transition of programme or system, they had to go and start afresh. So… It is not sustainable."* (*P4*)

This finding corroborated the discovery by Adeodoyin et al. (2018) who observed that empowerment programmes in Nigeria is challenged by what seems to be an insufficient disbursement of resources, which affects the release of starter packs for exiting beneficiaries. This challenge makes it impossible to sustainably lift beneficiaries out of poverty. An exit package will improve livelihood sustainability, by ensuring that the exited youths remain productive and in employment. This will also benefit the economy substantially.

4.3.3.2. Lack of leadership and poor management of N-Power

Participants observed that the first batch of beneficiaries of the N-Power programme had a better experience because the programme had a different manager. But with a new management the benefits were cut down. They seemed to suggest mismanagement of funds and a lackadaisical attitude towards the programme. This participant unambiguously stated:

> *"When the programme was managed by Osinbanjo (the then Vice President of Nigeria) it was better because then they listened to the beneficiaries. But they changed it and moved it to the office of the Minister (of humanitarian Affairs and social development), now most of their talks are just propaganda, nothing is being done, even most beneficiaries are still being owned backlogs (of their stipends)."* (*P2*).

Most literature on empowerment programmes in Nigeria have highlighted poor management as a major inhibitor of the success of empowerment programmes in Nigeria. Kayode

et al. (2014) emphasised that efforts designed to tackle unemployment in Nigeria are marred by, among other things, poor management practices by responsible officials. This has made it difficult to curb poverty associated with unemployment.

4.3.3.3. Superficial training

Responses from three participants indicated that though there was training in the form of an orientation, beneficiaries did not receive intensive training that could have impacted some advanced skills to explore viable opportunities or expand their choices. Four participants insisted they were not trained at all. According to them they simply received their deployment letters and resumed work. One of them commented:

> *"If …they took us to the field or other agricultural fields… maybe take us to their farms and show us how they harvest or produce. Then you empower us financially to go and start our own… some of us may even decide to go into poultry or fish farming. With this we can say categorically N-Power has helped us."* (*P3*)

One participant, however, mentioned that she attended two-weeks seminar and gained foundational knowledge in agriculture on the N-Power programme. This participant went ahead to establish an agricultural business and sounded quite positive about the impact of the programme on her livelihood. She remarked:

> "…*I was able to start a poultry farm on my own."* (*P7*)

Drawing from participants responses, it seems those who reported to have had some trainings find themselves attempting one or two business ideas during their time on the N-Power programme, this promoted income diversification among the beneficiaries. A practice that helps to protect individuals from becoming vulnerable to poverty. This seems to indicate that a certain degree of training should be a crucial element of any social investment programme. Isiaka (2015) warned that insufficient training is an impeding factor and can influence the quality and sustainability of empowerment programmes.

Likewise, a participant recommended investing in workshop facilities fitted with the necessary equipment to improve practical learning and intensify skill acquisition. He commented:

"...to have a better establishment; an automobile company where we can be trained properly rather than training in schools; because schools are not well equipped for such training." (*P2*)

This remark is supported by UNDESA (2012), which stated that there is a need to provide the right facilities for beneficiaries' learning experience. Surajo and Karim (2016) also recommended the establishment of skills acquisition centre in Nigeria to support capacity building for job creation.

4.3.3.4. Inadequate stipends

Discussions about beneficiaries' stipends sparked a lot of negative emotions, which alluded to the insensitivity of government towards needs of the beneficiaries. All eight participants maintained that it was difficult to survive with a stipend of 30 thousand naira (approximately 65.20 USD) monthly without an alternative source of income. Majority of them revealed that it was due to the poor stipend that they started businesses like agriculture and fashion, to boost their income to meet their livelihood objectives. Participants insisted that they were a lot of variables, including high inflation, that made it impossible to survive with that amount.

"We came when everything was hard in the country, there was inflation. So, if you are being paid 30 thousand naira how do you save and how do you manage to eat, then transporting yourself to your PPA (place of primary assignment)?" (P6?)

A participant felt the government was unfair and exploiting to pay graduate such amount. He remarked:

"I feel the stipend offered was too poor. Because the services we were rendering then, people were earning more for what we were doing." (*P4*)

These responses seem to suggest the promotion of underemployment among university graduates by the Nigerian government through the N-Power scheme. Underemployment is identified by many scholars including Olotu et al. (2015), Olowa (2012) and Iheonu and Urama, (2019) as a major contributor of poverty in Nigeria. Thus, it is ironic for a social investment programme to be reinforcing the problem it was designed to address. Similarly, the aim seems to be defeated when the programme failed to promote self-sufficiency because of the poor stipend paid to beneficiaries.

Thus, this participant advised for an improvement in the monthly stipend of beneficiaries to reflect current realities, enable beneficiaries earn a decent livelihood, and save to build financial capital that will help protect them against vulnerability.

> *"Provide a better stipend monthly that can sustain the participants for that period. So that after the programme you can get an apartment and start a living from there."* (*P5*)

This echoes the submission of UNDESA (nd.) that empowerment programmes should improve earnings for beneficiaries not just to enable them feed, but also to support in building a capital base with which they can earn a good living and support their household for a long period of time.

4.3.3.5. Continuous transitions of government affect the sustainability of the programme

A participant identified the inability of N-Power to inspire sustainability either by way of transiting beneficiaries from the programme to a more permanent job or business, or in terms of ensuring continuity especially when there is a change of government. This theme was well captured in the following response:

> *"A government will start a programme and when there is transition into another government most of the programmes that were running before, instead of continuity, there is lack of continuity with the successive government. Like before N-Power, there was Sure-p by the previous administration, N-Power replaced Sure-p."* (*P4*)

And

> *"There was no arrangement on how beneficiaries are going to transit from N-Power to self-sufficiency or working for the government." (P 4)*

Sustainability helps to build the confidence and resilience of beneficiaries of an empowerment programme, a lack of which affects individual's mental and emotional wellbeing, productivity and promotes relapsing back into poverty. The participant seems to suggest a legal framework for N-power to ensure its continuity by successive governments. Li et al. (2021) and DFID (nd) emphasised that poverty alleviation programmes should have vision for sustainability in other to positively impact poverty rate in developing countries. This also implies that N-Power

should be dependable with a clear vision of how beneficiaries would transit and gain resilience against some common shocks of unemployment.

4.3.3.6. Operational irregularities and corruption

Majority of the participants believed that government had the capacity to absorb them as staff into the system and finance their choosing businesses, but they also believe that the officials of the N-Power were pursuing their own interests, hence sabotaging beneficiaries. A participant remarked:

> *"… I came to understand that they had opportunities to push in their N-Power participants to the government school for permanent teaching jobs. But … when the opportunities were being given, they were hijacked by those that did not even apply for N-Power in the first place… The officials see it as an avenue to embezzle government funds. Even the Tabs that they gave us is substandard. It is not like the real Samsung tabs."* (*P1*)

This finding reinforces the submission by several scholars including Shabir et al. (2019), and Iheonu and Urama (2019) that corruption continues to jeopardise antipoverty or empowerment programmes in Nigeria. This affects the quality of training and experiences of beneficiaries who due to the interests of hijackers are denied the benefits of the programme. This has been stated as one of the reasons Nigeria has failed to improve its poverty rates despite the resources injected in empowerment and antipoverty programmes (Okunmadewa, et al., 2005).

4.3.4 Theme 4: Improving factors to position N-Power for poverty alleviation

Participants believed that N-Power is still relevant and although momentarily, it has been able to bridge the gap for some people and keep them engaged. They advised that the government should improve on all the inhibiting factors such as financial insufficiency, lack of sustainability, superficial training, and operational irregularities and corruption, to make it effective in sustaining livelihoods for its beneficiaries.

4.3.4.1. Explore collaborative partnership with other sectors

Participants suggested expanding the N-Power programme to incorporate the private sector to broaden the opportunities offered by the programme. A participant believed that the private sector

could retain some beneficiaries, thereby sharing the responsibilities with the government. His response:

> *"If the federal civil service could not absorb them, they could have partnered with the private sector, banks and companies."* (*P4*)

Another participant shared a similar opinion:

> *"…at the end of the programme the private sector may even want to incorporate the participant into their system. Or they would have sat and deliberated on the future of the beneficiaries."* (*P3*)

This theme is supported by scholars like Krantz (2001) who maintained that social development interventions should involve public and private sector. The private sector is able to support with good management, resources, and promote sustainability of project implementation.

4. 4 SUMMARY

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of the research this study. The analysed experiences of the N-Power beneficiaries through the lens of the sustainable livelihood framework are shared and discussed in relation to the contribution of the programme to youth empowerment and sustainable reduction of poverty. Attention was also paid to the factors that impeded N-Power's potential to reduce poverty on a sustainable basis, and ways in which N-Power can be improved to better impact beneficiaries of N-Power, were explicated. The final chapter presents the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the study's main findings, conclusion, and the recommendations. The aim of the study was to explore the perspectives of beneficiaries in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Nigeria, on the contribution of the N-Power component of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

The research question that guided the study was: What are the perspectives of FCT beneficiaries on N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria?

The aim of the study was achieved through the following objectives:

Objective one: To explore the experiences of FCT beneficiaries on N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria. This objective was achieved through the review of literature in Chapter 2, sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.8. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) and the sustainable livelihood framework was used as the lens for the data collection and analyses. Data collected and analysed in chapter 4, section 4.3.2 on N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria, contributed to achieving this objective.

Objective two: To determine the perceptions of N-Power FCT beneficiaries on factors impeding N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria. This objective was supported by literature in chapter 2, section 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4 2.3.6, and 2.3.9. Data collected and analysed in chapter 4, sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.3 specifying the factors impeding N-Power's contributions to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria supported the objective.

Objective three: To explore the perceptions of N-Power FCT beneficiaries on what factors might improve N-Power's contribution to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria. This objective was supported by literature in chapter 2, sections 2.3.4, 2.3.5, 2.3.8, and 2.3.9. Data collected and analysed in chapter 4, sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 contributed to achieving this objective.

Objective four: To highlight examples where N-Power contributed to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria. This objective was supported by literature in chapter 2, section 2.3.4 and 2.3.8. Data collected and analysed in chapter 4, section 4.3.2 contributed in achieving the objective.

5.2 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings revealed that:

Participants had expected an exit package, in form of a financial settlement, before being exited from the programme, or permanent employment. Lack of which made most participants without additional source of livelihoods fall back into unemployment and vulnerability. The exit package was highly anticipated by participants because of the opportunity or resources it will provide to start a business of their choice to make them self-reliant and enable them build financial capital to improve their resilience. Thus, it was disappointing for them to return to unemployment after being engaged. For these participants, N-Power failed to life them improve their livelihood sustainably.

N-Power encouraged participants to diversify their income in Agriculture. Some of the participants had to find alternative sources of income in Agricultural businesses like poultry and farm produce to diversify their earnings. While some were motivated by the opportunities N-Power presents, in terms of the location and industry in which they were engaged, others were motivated by the need to meet their daily needs by supplementing their meagre stipends.

Although most of the participants engaged in small scale agricultural activities to improve their income, these were not sustainable for lack of capital to establish on a scale that will generate profit. Thus, diversification of income was a coping strategy, for as long as participants were on the N-Power programme.

Lack of leadership and poor management of N-Power impedes N-Powers capability to improve livelihood sustainably. The experiences of participants indicated that some participants were mildly trained while others had no form of trainings is attributed to poor management. This limited participants opportunities to improve their livelihood options. Poor leadership and management also led to delays in payment of stipends to beneficiaries, unkept promises of an exit pack, and the lack of sustainability vision.

Most beneficiaries insisted that the management of N-Power needs to be improved. Therefore, improving leadership and accountability is necessary to make N-Power more impactful. Also, mismanagement of the programme by its officials added more stress to beneficiaries of the N-Power. As an empowerment programme, N-Power is expected to cushion the effect of unemployment and improve beneficiaries' options to effectively developing livelihood strategies and meet their livelihood outcomes. However, with poor level of trainings and three months backlogs in the payment of stipends, beneficiaries are constantly under pressure to earn a living or ensure their well-being. This instability caused by the backlogs in payment of stipends affects one's ability to save, hence vulnerable to any kind of negative change in the economy or environment.

Finally, ensuring sustainability of livelihood requires the opportunity to build or improve on assets. Accumulations of assets improves opportunities for individuals that results in building resilience against unpredictable events. Therefore, empowerment programmes should ensure that it create alternatives or expands individuals' options to engage in activities that can provide quality livelihood condition.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

5.3.1 Recommendations for youth empowerment programmes

- Improve on the management of empowerment programmes. Without good management even the best designed programme will be unsuccessful in making positive impacts. The management of N-Power programme should implement the programme with a sense of responsibility to the beneficiaries and commitment to the programme. Communication should be honest and strengthened on both sides so that expectations can be effectively managed. Payments of monthly stipends to beneficiaries should not be delayed to avoid increasing the vulnerability of beneficiaries.
- Improve the quality of training. Youth empowerment programme should improve on the quality of training for its beneficiaries by providing intensive trainings and investing in workshop equipment to facilitate learning and ensure adequate empowerment.

5.3.2 Recommendations for policy change regarding the contribution of N-Power to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction

- Promote private sector partnership. There is need for the private sector to be engaged to support youth empowerment programme in Nigeria. Their involvement should support in training and assimilation of good performing beneficiaries, to strengthen the sustainability of programme.
- Make N-Power transformative by granting beneficiaries access to credit facilities. Beneficiaries of N-Power programme should have easy access to credit facilities, business mentorship opportunities from financial institutions, and friendly payment plan of loans.

5.3.3 Recommendations for future research

This study, with its limitations, attempts to use the SLA to explore how beneficiary are influenced by the N-Power programme to improve their condition of living sustainably. More studies need to be conducted through the lens of SLF to determine the influence of N-Power on sustainably livelihoods. There is sufficient literature that concentrate on the performance of the N-Power programme as an empowerment programme. However, how beneficiaries are utilizing the opportunities presented by N-Power to come up with their own livelihood strategies that can sustainably earn them a good quality of life, is yet to be fully explored. Studies in this area is therefore highly encouraged.

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Appendix A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (PIS)

Good day,

My name is Freda Ene Ukpoju. I am a student of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the field of Social Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. My supervisor is Prof. Edmarie Pretorius. I am conducting a research study to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of the beneficiaries of N-power component of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), on its contribution to youth empowerment and sustainable poverty reduction.

For the research, I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 45 minutes. The interview activity will take place in Gwagwalada or Abuja municipal, within the FCT, in person at a convenient place and time.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored safely on my password protected laptop. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data.

During the research activity I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including what resources you have, what your livelihood condition is and how you are meeting your livelihood needs.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the findings of the research study, I will not include your name or anything that could identify you. With your permission, other researcher may use the data collected from this research study, but your name or any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Some of the questions asked may make you sad or feel upset. If this happens, I will stop the interview and probe what the thoughts and feelings are. If we establish that you can continue, I will resume the interview. If otherwise, I will reschedule the appointment to continue at another date. Support or counselling services will be made available, free of charge, for any feeling of distress as a result of the interview, during or after the interview session. This support service is available at Think Counselling Network and Human Development Initiative, free of charge. The name of the Counsellor is Rita Bassey and the contact details for the counselling service are 08038698516. If consented, I will follow up with a call to check up on your recovery.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Freda Ene Ukpoju

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Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Title of project:
Exploring the contributions of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on poverty Reduction in Nigeria: A focus on the N-Power beneficiaries' perspectives in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria

Name of researcher: Freda Ene Ukpoju

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
…… (date)

Appendix C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Preamble: Permission to record

Section one: Introduction

- How did you become a beneficiary of the N- power programme and where?
- What kind of empowerment were you recruited for under the N-power and for how long?
- Do you find the N-power programme useful to you? And why?

Section two: Contribution of N-power to sustainable youth empowerment and poverty reduction

- Some people hold the opinion that N-power has successfully provided long term jobs and more opportunities for their beneficiaries. In your experience, how has the programme benefitted you?

  Probe:
  What kind of skills or human potentials, capital resources and social networks do you have that has helped you earn a living before 2016?
  How has N-power impacted on those resources to improve your standard of living?
  Can you describe in detail a particular transformation you experienced because of N-power and in what area of livelihoods?

- The Nigerian government has maintained that the major purpose of N-power is to empower people so they can earn enough income to care for themselves and prevent them from falling into poverty. In your experience would you say N-power has improved your earnings well enough to achieve a better quality of life for a long time? Why?

  Probe: What example can you provide to illustrate what you mean?

- What kind of support do you receive from the government as a beneficiary, during and after N-power that helps to improve your experience and advance your opportunities?
  Probe:
  How helpful has the support being in increasing your potential to irk out a living?
  What would you have wished was added?

- In your experience do you feel the opportunities and benefits provided by the N-power programme can stand the test of time? Why?

  Probe:

  How does the opportunities presented by the N-power programme enable you maintain your standard of living in times of inflations, natural disasters like flood and drought, pandemics or change in government, increase in population of your households etc?

  With the opportunities provided by the N-power programme, will you be able to cater conveniently for health emergencies for you and your household when they occur in the future? How?

  Does the N-power training enable you to succeed regardless of change in a particular season (high production and nonavailability of employment opportunities), place, or time? Why do you think so?

Section three: Factors impeding N-power contribution to poverty reduction

- What would you say is the greatest drawback of the N-power programme in terms of providing long lasting jobs and opportunities for beneficiaries? Why?

  Probe
  What is your most dissatisfaction about the N-power programme?
  Where do you feel you needed help most that the programme could have addressed?

- What would you say were your expectations when you joined the N-power and how do you feel about your experience?

  Probe: In what way(s) has the N-power failed to meet your expectations? Why?

Section four: Improving N-power's contributions

- What would have been the best approach that N-power can take to create long lasting jobs and opportunities for the beneficiaries?
- In what ways do you feel the N-power programme should be improved to be more useful to support your resources and transform your condition of living for a long period of time?

  Probe:
  What change would you like to see?

- In what way do you feel N-power could have been better designed and positioned to make a long-term impact on the living condition of a beneficiary?

Section five: Examples of N-Power's contributions

- Are they any milestone you have achieved because of the N-power programme, which has completely changed your life now and for the future?

  Probe:
  Which is your favourite or most important story? Why?

Section six: Conclusion

- Are they any general opinions or comments would you like to give or make about the N-power programme?

Appendix D

DISTRESS PROTOCOL FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW WITH BENEFICIARIES OF THE N-POWER PROGRAMME ON THEIR EXPERIENCES OF THE PROGRAMME

Level of risk - Low risk, participants may be exposed to some level of discomfort, uneasiness or sadness while responding to certain questions about their personal experience and economic status. This may cause them to reflect on their vulnerability and make them dependent on empowerment programme.

Distress Protocol: The protocol for managing distress in the context of an interview.

During the interview, when a participant indicates that he or she is experiencing a high level of emotional stress or distress, OR shows behaviour that the discussion is too stressful such as trembling voice, crying or shaking, the following measures will be implemented:

1. Stop the interview.

Stage one response:

2. Investigate the participant's thoughts and feelings to determine their psychological and emotional state.

   The researcher will ask the following questions:

   - What thoughts are you having, please?
   - What are you feeling right now, please?
   - Do you believe you can carry on with your day?
   - Are you at ease?

Review: If participant say they can continue, then

3. Restart the interview.

If not, implement stage two response:

Stage two response:

4. make plans to reschedule the interview and advise the participant to get in touch with the counselling service provider listed on the information sheet.

Follow- up

5. Call the participant as a courtesy as soon as possible (if the participant consents).
6. If consented, debriefing session will be scheduled with participants to help deal with any stressful situation that may arise post interview, and where it is required, appointment will be scheduled for the participant to meet with the counsellor.

Appendix E

Permission Letter WhatsApp group Administrator

Npower WhatsApp Group Administrator,
Gwagwalada, FCT
08061378561
16th of January 2023

Freda Ene Ukpoju

University of the Witwatersrand,
School of Human and Community Development
Department of Social Work
+27117171888

Dear Ma,

Approval for Freda Ene Ukpoju to access N-power Whatsapp group FCT, to conduct research on "Exploring the contributions of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on poverty reduction in Nigeria: A focus on the N-Power beneficiaries' perspectives in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria"

Having received your request for permission to conduct research "Exploring the contributions of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on poverty reduction in Nigeria: A focus on the N-Power beneficiaries' perspectives in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Nigeria" with members of the FCT N-power Whatsapp group, as an Administrator of the N-Power Whatsapp group in FCT, I wish to notify you of the approval to conduct your study with members of the N-Power whatsapp group.

I confirm that the proposed study has been shared with us, we understand and are willing to provide access to the beneficiaries of N-power programme who are members of our whatsapp group. For the purpose of your study, we are willing to grant you 3-months access (to run from January to March), to members of the whatsapp group, by adding you to the group. This is to enable you share information with potential participants and make it possible for consenting participants to privately message you on their willingness to participate in your study.

By the end of March, you will be removed from the group since you are not a beneficiary of N-power programme, as a result, ineligible to be a member of the group. The Whatsapp group is a platform formulated by co-beneficiaries of the N-power programme to provide social and morale support for beneficiaries of the N-power programme within the FCT, to help them succeed. As an administrator of the group, it is my pleasure to confirm this approval.

Yours faithfully,

16/07/2023.

Ayomide Akinkahunsi
Administrator, Npower WhatsApp group, FCT-Nigeria
08061378561

Appendix F

Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: SW23/01/05**
PROJECT TITLE	Exploring the contribution of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on poverty Reduction in Nigeria: A focus on the N-Power beneficiaries' perspectives in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria.
INVESTIGATOR	**FREDA ENE UKPOJU**
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SOCIAL WORK
DATE CONSIDERED	17 February 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	LOW RISK
EXPIRY DATE	17 February 2026

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 20 February 202 **CHAIRPERSON**
(DR S Bala)

cc: Supervisor:

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR ☑

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature **Date** 15 / 03 / 2023

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES